Pollinator Habitat Program (PHP)

Questions and Responses

November 17, 2022

Eligibility

1. Regarding land trust eligibility, the RGA states that land trust organizations interested in applying must demonstrate "conservation of agricultural lands as their mission or amongst their stated purposes." Is referencing a current strategic plan which includes farmland conservation and protection sufficient for eligibility?
    Yes, that is sufficient for eligibility.

2. Are all 501c non-profits eligible to apply?
    California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) will utilize the Internal Revenue Service Tax Exempt Organization Search to determine eligibility. CDFA has not excluded certain types of non-profits from eligibility.

3. May a farmer apply directly with CDFA for Pollinator Habitat funding?
    Organizations such as Resource Conservation Districts, non-profits, University of California, California State Universities, California Community Colleges, and Federally and California-Recognized Native American Indian Tribes are eligible to apply to the program. After being awarded, organizations can then work with farmers to develop a project on their farm. CDFA will post information about the awarded organizations on the Pollinator Habitat Program website so that farmers can identify and reach out to organization for an on-farm project.

Strategic Partnerships and Role of Lead Person

4. Please provide guidance on what is meant by "strategic partnerships" and should this include both funded and unfunded partnerships in the responses to the questions in that section of the application.
Both funded and unfunded partnerships should be included. Strategic partnerships mean partnerships and collaborations the lead organization has built or plans to build to support their work and fill in any gaps of expertise or networks. It is important for CDFA to know how those connections will be utilized to plan, develop, and implement pollinator habitat projects. This includes: How will each partner contribute to the work conducted under the grant? Is it clear that the partnership will extend and enhance the ability of the lead organization to successfully implement the project as opposed to duplication of efforts? Is the partnership with an agricultural-focused organization or an organization with a history of pollinator-focused projects?

5. Can CDFA clarify the role of "lead person(s)"? If an applicant is the primary organization in regards to project management and implementation, but also works with a technical team in the field, who takes the lead on plant selection and project design, whose resumes should be upload as the lead person.
The lead person should be the technical expert on the project who will be providing technical expertise and leadership to other team members within the organization, the point person for CDFA communication, and primary contact for farmer/rancher partners. There can be two lead persons for the application. For example, one may be the organizational lead and one may be the technical lead. Please only upload resumes of the one or two lead persons.

Eligible On-Farm Project Sites and Farmer/Rancher Partners

6. Are community gardens eligible on-farm project sites?
Yes.

7. Are school gardens eligible on-farm project sites?
The Request for Grant Applications specifies that for the purpose of this program, an agricultural operation is defined as row, vineyard, field and tree crops, commercial nurseries, nursery stock production, and livestock and livestock product operations.

University and research farms are not eligible on-farm project sites. Urban farms and community gardens are eligible project sites.

8. Do the on-farm projects need to be completed at a commercial agricultural operation?
The Request for Grant Applications specifies that for the purpose of this program, an agricultural operation is defined as row, vineyard, field and tree crops, commercial nurseries, nursery stock production, and livestock and livestock product operations.

9. University and research farms are not eligible on-farm project sites. Urban farms and community gardens are eligible project sites.

10. Are female farmers considered disadvantaged?
The Farmer Equity Act has defined Socially Disadvantaged Group as "...all of the following: (1) African Americans (2) Native American Indians (3) Alaskan Natives (4) Hispanics (5) Asian Americans (6) Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders". These are the groups that Pollinator Habitat Program will consider Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers. CDFA's Farmer Equity Report is a good resource for more information.

11. Will the farmer or rancher need a farm identification number? Must they be a commercial rancher or farmer?
CDFA will not collect financial or tax information from farmers that work with awardees of Pollinator Habitat Program. CDFA will be requesting basic information about the farm including the name and location.

12. Are cannabis farms eligible?
To align with other CDFA programs cannabis farms will not be eligible sites for this solicitation of the Pollinator Habitat Program.

13. Can CDFA please help define "agricultural land" in the grant language below? "The funding is available for projects throughout the state of California. Pollinator habitat projects must be installed on agricultural land."
Please refer to page 6 of the Pollinator Habitat Program Request for Grant Applications for on-farm eligibility.

14. Is this grant program something that can be applied to areas outside of standard agricultural areas or are activities limited to only agricultural areas?
The grant is only for agricultural areas or agricultural land removed from production in the last 36 months.

15. Regarding project siting, if an awardee owns and manages a farm where they lease acreage to row crop farmers, can they, as the awardee, conduct outreach and collaborate with farmers to implement pollinator habitat projects on the property?
Yes.

16. Does the California agricultural operation the awardee works with need to be the owner of the land or can it be someone with a land/farming rental agreement? If the rental/lessee scenario is allowed, do they need to show proof of the lease, does the lease need to extend for a certain period, and do they need written consent from their landowner?
They do not need to be the owner, but they will need to provide a letter of commitment. In addition, the operator of the land commits to maintaining the project through the monitoring period and the practices are expected to be maintained for their lifespans. Please see INDEX OF CONSERVATION PRACTICES (https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/api/CPSFile/37698/000_CA_GS_Section_4 _Practice_List-Lifespan-Alpha_8_2022) for a comprehensive list of practice lifespans as a reference.

Budget and Funding

17. Can the set-rate practice implementation payment be split up among different persons/entities that were involved in the implementation? For example, if a grant recipient received $10,000 for hedgerows, could the awardee disburse those funds among more than one entity who assisted with the implementation? Such as when one group might do planting design, materials orders, and pre-planting set up and another group would do labor to get plants in the ground.
Awarded funds will be paid to the lead organization. Once the lead organization has been advanced or reimbursed, that money can be further divided among different entities. The lead organization is responsible for disbursement of funds to other participating organizations, contractors, and farmer/rancher partners.

18. What if administrative staff do not charge directly to specific grants? Is the procedure of including admin personnel costs (salary, fringe benefits) as part of indirect costs acceptable?

That procedure is acceptable as long as the indirect is still 25% or less of the 18% allowed for administrative and technical assistance direct costs. Direct costs are technical assistance and administrative tasks, not the flat payment rates. Therefore, indirect is only on the direct costs of technical assistance and administrative tasks. There is no indirect for the flat payment rates. An organization can be awarded a maximum of $2,000,000. Of the $2,000,000 at max 18% or $360,000 can be spend on direct (technical assistance, administration) and indirect. For example, $188,000 could be spent directly on technical assistance and $100,000 directly on administration. Then the 25% indirect on those direct costs would be $72,000. Between the technical assistance, administration, and indirect it is $360,000. Then the other 82% of the budget (in this case $1,640,000) needs to be spent on the flat payment rates.

19. Are flat fee contracts of $5,000 or less with subcontractors for things like site prep allowed or does a line-item budget need to be provided for each subcontractor?

Site prep is implementation of the practice and is thus under the flat-payment rate. The lead organization is responsible for disbursement of funds to other participating organizations, contractors, and farmer/rancher partners.

20. If the participating farmer provides their own time and labor for implementation, can the farmer be paid for that work or are direct payments to participating farmers prohibited?

Awarded funds will be paid to the lead organization. Once the lead organization has been advanced or reimbursed, that money can be further divided among different entities. The lead organization is responsible for disbursement of funds to other participating organizations, contractors, and farmer/rancher partners.

21. Are producers allowed to receive funding for more than one practice in their project?
Yes, producers can receive funding for multiple practices. In addition, awarded funds will be paid to the lead organization. Once the lead organization has been advanced or reimbursed, that money can be further divided among different entities. The lead organization is responsible for disbursement of funds to other participating organizations, contractors, and farmer/rancher partners.

22. Page 15-16 of the RGA indicate two different reimbursement requirements for project expenses. Which is correct?
As practices are completed the flat payment rates will be paid to the lead organization based upon verification of practice implementation. Invoicing for practice implementation will occur at least quarterly.

23. The awardee will also submit invoices to CDFA at least quarterly for direct and indirect costs related to technical assistance and administration.

CDFA will provide the awardee with detailed invoicing instructions following the award announcement.

24. From an accounting perspective, we are not able to show cost share for expenses occurring after the grant term ends. What documentation of post-grant monitoring expenses is CDFA expecting?
From an accounting perspective documentation is not needed to show cost-share for the post-project outcome monitoring award period. However, the post-project outcome monitoring must occur and that is considered cost-share.

25. Is any of the funding for this grant coming from a federal source? If it is, would grantees be considered sub-recipients?
No, it is not from a federal source.

26. Can the flat payment rates for practices be spent on the development of plant materials prior to the purchase of plant materials?
CDFA will not collect cost details regarding the expenditures that support practice implementation. The flat payment rates can be used support practice implementation including the development or purchase of plant materials.

27. Can awardees hire staff with the flat-payment rates?
CDFA will not be collecting receipts or expense information related to the flat payment. Recipients are free to use the flat payment rate to support different aspects of the project as long as the practices are completed.

28. Are administrative costs included in the Technical Assistance cost section or are they considered part of the "Practices" line item?
On the budget an applicant can enter personnel and contractor costs associated with administration and technical assistance. Tasks associated with reporting and invoicing CDFA are considered to be administrative tasks. Technical Assistance costs are related to an organization's outreach to farmers and working with farmers to plan an on-farm project. The "practices" line item must be 82% or more of the project costs. It includes costs related to installing the practice, including labor and supplies for the practices. CDFA will reimburse these costs based upon flat rates which are in the Request for Grant Applications. The flat payment rates have been adapted from payment rates developed by United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Services after an analysis of the anticipated costs, including current costs for material and labor within the state and also the fair marketplace compensation for opportunity costs that may arise(https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/getting-assistance/payment-schedules. This reference describes the anticipated costs associated with each practice:
https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/CA/Practice_Scenario_Descriptions_CA_FY19_Indexed.pdf

29. How much detail should be included when an applicant completes the budget? In particular how specific should each line item be?
Each line item for personnel (administrative, technical assistance, fringe benefits, and contractual) should include the employee classification, total estimated cost, and a brief narrative of activities that the employee classification will conduct within that budget category. Applicants can determine the level of specificity in describing their direct costs. If an award is granted and there are changes to the costs of budget categories from what was estimated at the application stage, CDFA can work with a grantee to shift costs between different budget categories. A line-item shift request and justification will be required. Changes to costs within a budget category will not require a line-item shift.

30. For the practices line item in the budget form on the application, does the applicant need to use the CDFA flat rate payment?
Please estimate the amount that will be used on CDFA Pollinator Habitat Program practices. In the application for funding, the applicant will simply estimate a lump sum for the budget related to practices. These practices include the current costs for material and labor. This must be at least 82% of the total amount requested. At this time, it is not necessary to know which practices will be utilized or how much will be spent on individual practices. If the project is funded this information will be required in Quarterly Reports as the project progresses. After an award, a recipient will submit invoicing based upon the flat rate for each type of practice that is installed. In short, at the time of application, it is not required to know all the practices and quantities that will be installed.

31. Can the entity applying use the 82% of funds devoted to implementation to assist farms and ranches with implementation tasks?
For each practice that can be supported on a farm, CDFA will pay a flat rate to the awardee of the PHP grant. CDFA will not require a line-item budget or supporting documents that outlines all of the actual costs associated with practice implementation. The flat payment rates have been developed in consideration of supplies, plants, labor, and other expected expenses. The payment rates have been adapted from payment rates developed by United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Services. CDFA's payment rates are higher than the anticipated costs so it is likely that the rate may cover some costs such as assistance with implementation tasks.

32. There seems to be some overlap between allowable activities between the 18% admin and the 82% implementation divisions. How should an applicant accurately separate the staff time for the budget?
The 18% administrative and technical assistance costs will be related to the outreach, technical assistance, administration activities associated with the grant, identifying farmers to participate, planning the implementation of practices. Any activities that are directly associated with implementing or installing a specific practice are included within the flat payment rate associated with the practice. In the budget, administrative costs would be those costs associated with reporting and invoicing CDFA for the project, including tracking of progress or tracking of expenditures. Technical assistance costs would be those costs associated with performing outreach or working with farmers and ranchers.

33. Are subcontractors limited to the 18% for administration or only the leads?
Any costs directly associated with the administering and technical assistance aspects of the program are limited to 18%. The majority of the funds (82% or more) needs to be for practice implementation.

Matching Contributions

34. Is there a maximum amount/percentage of match funds when applying? Is that encouraged or discouraged?
CDFA will not be tracking matching funds; matching funds during the course of the grant agreement are not required. CDFA acknowledges that the outcome monitoring that is required after the project is completed will require resources. For this reason, we are identifying this outcome monitoring as match.

35. If volunteers help install the pollinator habitat, would their time be considered a match?
Yes, this could be considered match, but CDFA will not be tracking matching funds.

Technical Assistance

36. We perceive technical assistance as helping a landowner develop a plan for what, where, and when practices will be used and implementation as developing the practice designs, plant species or seed selection, ordering seed/plants, ordering/moving irrigation/plant protection materials, and any planning, coordinating, and executing tasks related to site preparation, planting/seeding, and maintenance. Can CDFA provide more detail regarding the distinction between technical assistance and practice implementation?
Technical assistance includes outreach, developing plans with producers, gathering documentation, coordinating with vendors in advance of practice implementation, and project design. Practice implementation is anything to do with the implementation of the practices (labor, materials, project management, etc.). Since the practices are reimbursed with a flat-payment rate some of that money may go towards providing assistance with implementation.

37. The RGA states grant recipients must not charge additional fees to the farmers and ranchers for technical assistance services. Is this restriction only during the three-year grant, or does it also include the three years of monitoring post-grant?

    Once the grant has been closed out the requirements of the grant have finished and CDFA has no further purview of the awardee's engagement with the growers at that point. As will be agreed in the grant agreement, the Outcome Monitoring plan must still be completed by the awardee after the project period has ended and this will likely require an ongoing relationship between the PHP awardee and the land manager at the site of an on-farm pollinator project.

Integrated Pest Management

38. Is the technical assistance provider responsible for providing Integrated Pest Management training to the producer or are they required to attend an outside training?

    The grant awardee (who will be providing technical assistance) will need to provide Integrated Pest Management training to the farmers/ranchers involved with the on-farm projects. An awardee could utilize a contractor to provide this training to the farmers or ranchers.

39. Is there a practice for invasive species plant removal and/or dirt preparation before planting pollinator habitat?

    There is NRCS CPS 595 Pest Management Conservation System, which is implementing a pest management conservation system on land not currently utilizing one.

    Most of the practices flat-payment rates include site preparation. Please see here for more details:
    https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/CA/Practice_Scenario_Descriptions_CA_FY19_Indexed.pdf

Outcome Monitoring and Project Maintenance

40. What are, if any, the ramifications if an organization does not hit their targeted/proposed feet of hedgerow other than lowering the grant payment? Will it affect their ability to apply to CDFA in the future?
CDFA understands that the proposal being submitted is an estimate. The organization will only be reimbursed for practices they have completed. CDFA will withhold 10 percent from the total grant award reimbursement until the verification requirement is complete and meets the expectations agreed upon in the Scope of Work. During implementation of the project CDFA will work with awardees to make reasonable modifications to the proposed projects. Timely communication will be the most important factor in evaluating performance. For more information on performance metrics please see page 13 of the Pollinator Habitat Program Request for Grant Applications.

41. During the Outcome Monitoring period, does the awardee only have to monitor and report, or is it expected to provide technical assistance to the participants to improve outcomes? Will the failure of any individual restoration project be considered "non-performance" by the awardee so that CDFA would be allowed to recover grant funding?
During the Outcome Monitoring period the awardee is required to monitor and report. Once the project period is over, the awardee's responsibility for the project success has been fulfilled. CDFA hopes that projects sites will be maintained, and land managers of the project sites should make a commitment to maintaining the project within their letter of commitment.

42. How often does CDFA expect to receive updates or reports on the Outcome Monitoring Period metrics during this period?
Annually.

43. While matching funds are not required, will an identified funding plan for the Outcome Monitoring Period be factored into application scoring?
The scoring questions include "Will the metrics that the organization proposes for an outcome monitoring plan be adequate for CDFA to report on outcomes of the on-farm projects? Does the project provide a plan for continued longevity and maintenance of the project?". There are no further questions regarding outcome monitoring that will be part of the scoring.

44. What is the expected maintenance period for the practices, and does it differ by practice?
Following the end of the grant term, awardees will monitor and report on outcomes for three years. After the Outcome Monitoring period it is expected, but not required for the practices to be maintained for the practice lifespan. The lifespan differs per practice. Please see INDEX OF CONSERVATION PRACTICES (https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/api/CPSFile/37698/000_CA_GS_Section_4_Practice_List-Lifespan-Alpha_8_2022) for a comprehensive list of practice lifespans as a reference.

45. During the Outcome Monitoring Period, will an organization be required to report on each project executed on each farm annually, or are they able to report on a portion of the projects (i.e. a third of the total number of projects) each year?
Please report on each project executed on each farm annually.

46. Does CDFA have a webform or other standard template for quarterly narrative reports, or will the format be up to the organization's discretion?
CDFA will create the template for the quarterly reports. These will be made available to the awarded applicants.

Other

47. Where can a copy of the recording of the Pollinator Habitat Program Informational Webinar be found?
The recording from the Pollinator Habitat Program Informational Webinar can be found on the Pollinator Habitat Program website (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oefi/php/) or directly at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZuJtcjauOWw

48. When will the awarded organizations be announced and will there be a list of them posted for farmers/ranchers to contact?
CDFA expects to announce the awardees of this solicitation in early 2023. A list of grant awardees will be posted on the Pollinator Habitat Program website after the grants have been awarded and an email notification will be sent out regarding the awards. Please sign up for email notifications on the PHP website to receive those emails. CDFA will encourage farmers and ranchers to reach out to awarded organizations if they wish to partner for an on-farm pollinator habitat installation.

49. Is this a one-time program or will there be future opportunities to apply for grants in 2023 or beyond?

CDFA expects to hold another solicitation in the future (likely in 2023), but this program is not continuously appropriated funding on an annual basis.

50. Does Amplifund support all browsers and devices?

Amplifund does not support all browsers and devices. Amplifund supports the following browser versions:

- Google Chrome (current supported releases)
- Mozilla Firefox (current supported releases)
- Microsoft Edge (current supported releases)
- Apple Safari for Mac OS X (10+)

Unless otherwise specified above, Amplifund does not support browser versions that are no longer supported by their manufacturer. In addition, non-Mac Apple devices do not support Amplifund and are unable to submit applications on these devices. We encourage you to submit the application well before the deadline so that there is adequate time for technical support if needed. As a reminder the deadline is Wednesday, November 23rd, 2022, by 5pm PST. If you are having technical difficulties, please reach out to CDFA.OEFI_PHP@cdfa.ca.gov.

51. Can CDFA provide a sample or template for the award agreement.

This is still under development.