

2014 State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program (SWEEP)

Second Solicitation

Friday, November 7, 2014

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. **Revised October 29, 2014.** Where can applicants access the 2014 State Water Efficiency and Enhancement (SWEEP) Round 2 Application Guidelines online?
The 2014 SWEEP Round 2 Application Guidelines are available on California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) SWEEP website, www.cdfa.ca.gov/go/SWEEP. The link to the Application Guidelines is located under the heading "SWEEP Round II Applicant Information."
2. Is the maximum grant award \$150,000 per agriculture operation or per application?
The maximum grant award is \$150,000 per agriculture operation/Tax Identification (ID).
3. Can organizations submit a single application on behalf of a group of agriculture operations?
No, organizations cannot submit a single application on behalf of a group of agriculture operations. An agriculture operation can only submit one application using a unique Tax ID.
4. Can an agriculture operation submit more than one application?
No, agriculture operations can only submit one application using a unique Tax ID. Refer to page 2 of the Application Guidelines.
5. Can an organization apply on behalf of the agriculture operation?
Yes, organizations may submit an application on behalf of the agriculture operation. However, the application must include the agriculture operation's business name and Tax ID. If awarded, the grant agreement will be between the CDFA and the agriculture operation.
6. Do applicants need a DUNS number to submit a SWEEP application?
No, applicants do not need a DUNS number to submit a SWEEP application.
7. Can applicants request funds for project management for organizations, such as a Resource Conservation District (RCD)?
No, funds must be utilized by the agriculture operation for project implementation expenditures only.
8. Can application information submitted in Financial Assistance Application Submittal Tool (FAAST) be accessed by the State Water Resource Control Board (SWRCB) for regulatory purposes?
No, only SWRCB staff assisting with the FAAST system during the solicitation process will have access to application information. Therefore, collected information will not be used for regulatory purposes.
9. Is the information provided in the SWEEP application available to the public?
Information provided in the SWEEP application may be subject to a Public Records Act (PRA) request. Under the PRA, CDFA must make available public records upon request by the public. However, certain personal identifying information is generally exempt from disclosure.

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10. When the agriculture operation is leasing land, does the land owner need to apply on behalf of the agriculture operation?
No, the agriculture operation can submit an application. It is the responsibility of the agriculture operation to comply with the terms of their lease agreement. CDFA encourages all applicants to notify the land owner of the proposed project. If awarded, CDFA will enter into a grant agreement with the agriculture operation.
11. Can funds be used to make improvements to distribution systems outside the boundaries of the property impacted by the proposed project (i.e. irrigation district pump)?
No, the project must be implemented on the agricultural operation. An agricultural operation is defined as “a row, vineyard, field and tree crops, commercial nurseries, nursery stock production and greenhouse operation” as outlined on page 1 of the Application Guidelines.
12. If multiple agriculture operations partner with a water district to implement a single project, can each agriculture operation and the water district submit separate applications for a portion of that project?
Each agriculture operation must submit a separate application using a unique Tax ID. The contribution from the water districts to implement each project can be considered matching funds. Water districts are not eligible entities for SWEEP funding. Additionally, projects must be installed within the boundaries of an agriculture operation.
13. What is the definition of “expanding” an agriculture operation?
Expanding an agriculture operation is defined as converting additional or new acreage that has not previously been farmed to farmland.
14. How do applicants determine if a property impacted by a project is in a disadvantaged community?
A “disadvantaged community” is defined as a community with a median household income less than 80% of the statewide average. Appendix A of the Application Guidelines provides two resources for determining if a community is a “disadvantaged community”. Applicants may use another resource; however, an explanation must be provided in FAAST question 4 (a). Refer to page 5-6 of the Application Guidelines for additional information on disadvantaged communities.
15. The Application Guidelines state, “SWEEP funding cannot be combined with USDA, NRCS Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP).” Since EQIP awards have not been announced, can applicants apply to both SWEEP and EQIP, and if awarded EQIP funding, withdraw their SWEEP application?
Yes, applicants may apply to both programs. However, if awarded EQIP funding, applicants would not be eligible to receive SWEEP funding.
16. Can agriculture operations request funds for the cost of the project design?
No, funding can only be requested and utilized for project implementation. The agriculture operation is responsible for any costs associated with the project design.
17. Are service charges, such as a company providing soil moisture information on a monthly or annual basis, allowable expenses under SWEEP?
No, service and maintenance costs are not allowable expenses.

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18. If a project's costs exceed the USDA, NRCS payment schedules provided in Appendix D of the Application Guidelines, are the excess costs matching funds to the project?
Yes. CDFA will only reimburse for costs provided in the USDA, NRCS payment schedules in Appendix D of the Application Guidelines to the extent feasible. If costs to implement a project exceed the USDA, NRCS payment schedules, the excess costs are considered matching funds.

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19. Can applicants use additional USDA, NRCS practice standards that are not listed in Appendix D of the Application Guidelines?
Yes, applicants may use additional USDA, NRCS practice standards as long as those practices result in both water savings and greenhouse gas reductions. If applicants use practice standards not listed in Appendix D, then a detailed explanation of those practices and unit costs should be provided in the FFAST application.

ELIGIBILITY

1. Are recipients who were awarded SWEEP funding in Round 1 eligible to apply for Round 2?
Yes, recipients awarded SWEEP funding in Round 1 are eligible to apply for Round 2.
2. Are water supplier entities eligible for SWEEP funding?
No, water suppliers are not eligible for SWEEP funding. An agricultural operation is defined as "a row, vineyard, field and tree crops, commercial nurseries, nursery stock production and greenhouse operation" as outlined on page 1 of the Application Guidelines.
3. Are non-profit organizations growing fruits and vegetables for the community, operating garden based educational programs, selling produce, etc. considered agriculture operations as defined in the Application Guidelines? If yes, are non-profit organizations eligible to receive funding?
Yes, a non-profit organization involved in the production of "a row, vineyard, field and tree crop," is eligible.
4. If elements of an irrigation system are already installed, is an application for reimbursement of that system eligible?
No. Funding can only be used to implement projects after a grant agreement is executed between CDFA and an agriculture operation. Funding cannot be utilized as reimbursement for a previous installation or to cover maintenance and operation costs of any existing system.
5. Is converting one crop to a lower watering crop (i.e. sprinkler irrigated pasture to drip irrigated vineyard) an eligible project?
Yes. Converting one crop to a lower watering crop is eligible for funding as long as water savings and greenhouse gas reductions can be calculated and quantified.
6. Is lining or preparing an existing pond to capture rainwater eligible for funding?
Yes. Lining or preparing an existing pond to capture rain water is eligible for funding as long as water savings and greenhouse gas reductions can be calculated and quantified.

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7. Is a project converting from groundwater use to recycled water use eligible for funding?
A project converting groundwater use to recycled water use may be eligible for funding as long as water savings and greenhouse gas emission reductions can be calculated and quantified. If the project demonstrates the applicant is simply switching water supplies, the project is not eligible for funding.

New questions: October 29, 2014

8. If a project will be installed on an orchard that will be replanted (i.e. new tree plantings), is that project eligible for funding?
Yes. Applicants may apply for funding if the project property location will be replanted as long as the land was previously used as farmland. Applicants must still be able to calculate water savings and greenhouse gas reductions for their project.
9. Are sand media filters eligible for funding, if the applicant can demonstrate efficiency improvements?
Yes, sand media filters may be eligible for SWEEP funding. Applicants must explain the need for the filters in their application under the "Proposed Water Use System" and explain the water-savings benefits of the filters to their system.
10. If a neighbor agreed to allow their pump station to be used by an applicant to run a drip system on their property for a proposed project, is this "conveyance line" eligible for funding?
The "conveyance line" may be eligible under the following circumstances: (1) the neighboring landowner is included as a "cooperating entity" on the application and contact information is provided; and (2) the grant applicant must explain the agreement between the two parties in the description of the "Proposed Water Use System" in the grant application.
11. Is the installation of infrastructure on public land or right of ways eligible for funding?
No, SWEEP funds cannot be used for installation of infrastructure on public land or right of ways.

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12. Are products that are not irrigation-related (i.e. sprayers, wind machines, etc.) that reduce water use and greenhouse gas emissions eligible for funding?
No, SWEEP funds cannot be used for products that are not irrigation-related. SWEEP can only fund elements of a project that are directly related to irrigation on farms.

FAAST APPLICATION

1. What property locations need to be provided in Section I of the FAAST Application Questions?
Applicants must provide the location of the property and total acreage that will be impacted by the project.

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2. Does the “Applicant Information” requested in FFAST, need to be the agriculture operation’s information?
Yes, the “Applicant Information” must include information specific to the agriculture operation, such as the business name, Tax ID, and contact information. If awarded, CDFA will need this information to enter into a grant agreement with that agriculture operation.
3. Who should be listed as the Project Director or Project Manager in the “Project Management” tab?
The agriculture operation’s primary contact must be listed as either the Project Director or Project Manager in the “Project Management” tab. If an organization is applying on behalf of an agriculture operation, that organization may also include a contact person(s). Applicants are strongly encouraged to provide two different contacts for the Project Director and Project Manager as this is the only contact information CDFA will have for applications.
4. In Section II: Ranking Criteria, question 3(b) requests applicants indicate projected greenhouse gas emission reductions (tonnes of CO₂e/year/acre). If the value of the projected greenhouse gas emission reduction is less than “1”, how do applicants provide that value in FFAST?
For questions in FFAST requesting to provide a numerical value for calculations, such as projected water savings and greenhouse gas emission reductions, applicants may indicate a value less than “1” by indicating a “0” followed by a decimal point (.), and then the digits that fall behind the decimal point.

Example: Indicate “0.82” tonnes of CO₂e/year/acre or “0.002” tonnes of CO₂e/year/acre.
5. Should applicants attach the actual contractor estimates with the project design in FFAST?
Contractor estimates are not required with the project design. However, applicants are required to provide the actual contractor estimates when completing the Budget Worksheet under “Contractor/Consultant” budget category. Applicants are required to download, complete and attach the Budget Worksheet in FFAST question #20. Refer to Appendix B of the Application Guidelines for a preview of the Budget Worksheet.
6. Can a bid from an irrigation company be attached in lieu of the budget worksheet?
No, the Budget Worksheet is a required attachment. Applicants must download, complete and attach the Budget Worksheet in FFAST. Refer to question 20 in FFAST and Appendix B of the Application Guidelines.

PROJECT DESIGN

1. Is there a specific format required for the project design?
No, there is not a specific format required for the project design. However, in general, a project design should include a schematic detailing the irrigation distribution system layout (e.g., pipelines, valves, filter stations, distribution uniformity values), including agronomic information (e.g., water application rate, crop water demand).

Applicants are encouraged to use conservation resources in the application process (i.e. an RCD, USDA NRCS, or a private consultant). Refer to page 3 and 4 of the Application Guidelines for additional information regarding the project design.

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2. If a project includes installing a variable frequency drive (VFD) on a pump, will a project design for the entire irrigation system be required?

If the project only consists of installing a VFD, then a narrative describing the pump improvement will suffice for the project design.

RANKING CRITERIA

1. Does a project need to result in water savings and greenhouse gas emission reductions?
Yes, projects for Round 2 must result in water savings **and** greenhouse gas emissions reductions to be considered for funding.

2. Is there a minimum threshold for water savings and greenhouse gas reductions?
No, there is not a minimum threshold for water savings and greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

3. What are some examples of “management practices” that can result in water savings and GHG reductions?
Examples of management practices that can result in water savings and GHG reductions may include conservation tillage, canopy management, mulching, or other practices that are tailored to the crop or region.

4. What supporting documentation is required for water savings and greenhouse gas emissions reductions?
For baseline water use calculations applicants may use on-farm data from the previous growing season and attach documentation which may include flow meter data/readings, water bills, or the USDA NRCS water savings calculator (link in Appendix C of the Application Guidelines) completed with the agriculture operations information, or other documentation. For baseline greenhouse gas emission reduction calculations applicants may use previous growing season data and attach utility bills, fuel receipts/invoices etc.

5. If an applicant is applying to expand on their Round 1 SWEEP project, what baseline water use number should be provided in the Round 2 application?
Applicants should use the actual on-farm data from the previous growing season to determine their baseline water use for their Round 2 application.

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6. For baseline water use and greenhouse gas emissions supporting documentation, should applicants submit 12 months of data from the previous growing season? Yes. If applicants have the past 12 months of data available, it is beneficial to attach all documents relating to the previous growing season. This information is helpful in the evaluation of grant applications during the technical review process.

7. Is converting an irrigation pump from fossil fuels to electricity the only consideration for greenhouse gas reduction calculations?
No, a project does not have to include conversion to electric pumps. Projects can include other elements (i.e. soil moisture sensors, evapotranspiration based scheduling, and field probes) that will result in greenhouse gas emission reductions. Therefore, any portion of a project that reduces water pumping can be counted towards greenhouse gas reduction calculations.

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8. Is the Water Use Calculator Tool provided in Appendix C of the Application Guidelines sufficient supporting documentation for baseline water use calculations?
Yes. For instances when applicants do not have on-farm water use data available, such as water bills or flow meter readings, the Water Use Calculator Tool is sufficient supporting documentation for baseline water use calculations.
9. Are the Greenhouse Gas Calculator Tools provided in Appendix C of the Application Guidelines sufficient supporting documentation for baseline greenhouse gas emissions?
No. Applicants must provide some other form of supporting documentation (i.e. fuel receipts or electricity bills) because the Greenhouse Gas Calculator Tools do not provide actual on-farm use information.
10. Are applicants required to provide supporting documentation for water savings and greenhouse gas reductions **after** project installation?
No. Applicants are only required to provide supporting documentation for **baseline** water use and greenhouse gas emissions. The verification component after projects are installed will quantify actual water savings and greenhouse gas reductions.
11. What is the time period applicants should use to determine water savings calculations?
Applicants should compare the previous growing season to the next year growing season after project implementation to determine their estimated water savings.

MATCHING FUNDS

1. Are matching funds required?
No, matching funds are not required. However, CDFA strongly encourages applicants to provide matching funds as additional consideration will be given to those project during the review process.
2. Can applicants use funds received from other incentive programs as matching funds?
Yes, funds received from other incentive programs can be used as matching funds. Applicants must indicate in the budget worksheet the amount of the incentive that will be contributed to the project. However, SWEEP funding cannot be combined with USDA, NRCS Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) financial assistance.
3. What information should an applicant include in the matching funds written documentation?
Supporting documentation, often written as a letter, should confirm the contribution source, type and amount of the contribution, as well as include activities that will be conducted in support of the project. Account statements or other financial documents relating to the matching contributions are not required.

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4. Can Round I Grant Recipients apply for Round II funding to cover matching funds committed to Round I projects?

No, matching funds committed to Round I projects cannot be submitted for funding in Round II.

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5. If elements of an irrigation system are installed before the implementation period of the proposed project (December 2014 – June 2015), can those costs be considered matching funds?

No, elements of an irrigation system installed before the implementation period of the proposed project are not considered matching funds.