



# CLIMATE SMART AGRICULTURE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GRANTS

*To Support the FY 2022-23 Healthy Soils Incentive Program and  
State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program*

## Draft Request for Proposals For Public Comment

Release Date: December 5, 2022

Comments Due: December 16, 2022, by 5:00 PM Pacific Time

Submit comments to [cdfa.oefi\\_csa\\_ta@cdfa.ca.gov](mailto:cdfa.oefi_csa_ta@cdfa.ca.gov)



**Office of Environmental Farming and Innovation**

1220 N Street

Sacramento, CA 95814

[CDFA.OEFI\\_CSA\\_TA@cdfa.ca.gov](mailto:CDFA.OEFI_CSA_TA@cdfa.ca.gov)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

BACKGROUND .....	2
Funding and Duration .....	2
Funding Scenarios – CSA Program and Bilingual Services .....	3
Estimated Timeline .....	3
Eligibility .....	4
Requirements and Restrictions .....	4
Technical Assistance Program Objectives.....	5
HOW TO APPLY .....	7
Workplan .....	8
Budget Template .....	8
Questions and Answers (Q&A).....	9
REVIEW PROCESS.....	9
Administrative Review .....	9
APPEAL RIGHTS:.....	9
Technical Review.....	10
Scoring Criteria .....	10
Notification and Feedback.....	12
AWARD PROCESS.....	12
Grant Agreement Execution .....	12
Award Timeline .....	12
Reporting .....	13
Payment Process .....	13
Critical Project Review .....	13
Appendix A: Preview and Navigation of Application Portal.....	14

## **BACKGROUND**

AB 2377 (Irwin, 2018) requires the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to establish a technical assistance grant program to provide funds to Technical Assistance Providers (TAP) to assist the applicants of Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) programs.

The CSA Technical Assistance Grant Program is designed to provide technical assistance to individual farmers and ranchers who are interested in applying for or have received incentive awards from CDFA's CSA Healthy Soils Program (HSP) and State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program (SWEEP).

- The HSP Incentives Program provides financial incentives to California growers and ranchers to implement conservation management practices that sequester carbon, reduce atmospheric greenhouse gases (GHGs), and improve soil health.
- SWEEP provides financial incentives for California agricultural operations to invest in irrigation systems that reduce GHG emissions and save water.

### **Funding and Duration**

CDFA was appropriated \$85 million for Healthy Soils Program and \$110 million for the State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program from the California State Budget authorized by the Budget Act of 2022 (SB 154). CDFA will make available 5% of these appropriations for technical assistance to support HSP and SWEEP. At least 25% of the grant funds will be used to provide outreach and technical assistance to Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers<sup>1</sup>.

Applicants may provide technical assistance for one or both (HSP Incentives and SWEEP) programs.

- The total maximum grant award will be \$250,000 over three years to support both incentives solicitations for HSP- and SWEEP-appropriated funds from fiscal year 2022-2023.
- HSP technical assistance activities will span a three-year term
- SWEEP technical assistance activities will span 18 months to two years, depending upon the date of grant execution.

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<sup>1</sup> "Socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher" means a farmer or rancher who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group. "Socially disadvantaged group" means a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities. These groups include 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.

- CDFA reserves the right to offer an award amount different than the amount requested.
- Technical assistance grant funds may not be expended prior to establishing the contract and execution of the grant agreements.

Providing support for farmers and ranchers in languages other than English is an important priority for CDFA. To encourage technical assistance providers to offer bilingual support, CDFA will provide an increased annual award to organizations that can support non-English speakers with the expectation that outreach, application technical assistance and implementation technical assistance will be made available to non-English speakers.

**Funding Scenarios – CSA Program and Bilingual Services**

<b>CSA Program</b>	<b>Languages Supported*</b>	<b>Maximum Award</b>	<b>Term</b>
SWEEP	English	\$60,000	2 Years
SWEEP	English and another language	\$100,000	2 Years
HSP	English	\$90,000	3 Years
HSP	English and another language	\$150,000	3 Years
SWEEP and HSP	English only	\$150,000	3 Years HSP, 2 Years of SWEEP activities
SWEEP and HSP	English and another language	\$250,000	3 Years HSP, 2 years of SWEEP activities

\*Applicants must consider the demographics and languages spoken in their service area. A request for the higher funding level must be supported with a strong statement of need directly related to the languages spoken within the service area. Spanish, Punjabi, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Hmong are languages spoken among California's farming community and in need of support, but other languages may also be supported.

**Estimated Timeline**

<b>Program Activity</b>	<b>Estimated Timeframe</b>
Receive public comment on Draft Request for Grant Applications	December 2022
Finalize RGA and Develop Application Portal	December 2022-January 2023
Application Period for CSA TA Program	Early 2023
Application Review	Spring 2023
Announce Awards	Summer 2023

Award Process

Summer 2023 – see [Award Process](#)

### **Eligibility**

The following entities are eligible to apply for the CSA Technical Assistance Grants: Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs), University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE), and non-profit organizations. Entities applying for CSA Technical Assistance Grants, hereafter referred to as Technical Assistance Providers (TAPs), must have demonstrated technical expertise in the implementation of agricultural practices and technologies supported through HSP and/or SWEEP.

### **Requirements and Restrictions**

TAPs that receive grant awards may not charge fees to provide technical assistance to farmers and ranchers who wish to apply for HSP and/or SWEEP funding. Outreach materials prepared by the grant recipient must indicate that the assistance is free, and no fees or costs will be imposed on the farmer or rancher.

Grant recipients may not require farmers and ranchers to include specific proprietary products or favored contractors and other service providers when assisting in project design.

TAPs must declare all conflict(s) of interest including sponsorship or funding by any corporation that may profit from CDFA's CSA incentives programs.

A TAP may not be the lead applicant for more than one technical assistance grant award per CSA program. Multiple organizations can partner on a single application. CDFA encourages statewide cooperation among regional TAPs.

Grant recipients must prioritize assistance to Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers (SDFRs), and farms and ranches that are 500 acres or less. Additionally, grant recipients should also prioritize assistance to AB 1550 Priority Populations<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> AB 1550 Priority Populations as applicable to California Climate Investments include Disadvantaged Communities identified by the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) as the top 25% most impacted census tracts in [CalEnviroScreen 3.0](#), and Low-income Communities and Households, defined as the census tracts and households, respectively, that are either at or below 80 percent of the statewide median income, or at or below the threshold designated as low-income by the California Department of Housing and Community Development's (HCD) [2016 State Income Limits](#). For more information and mapping tool, visit <https://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/capandtrade/auctionproceeds/communityinvestments.htm>.

[Assembly Bill \(AB\) 1550](#) (Gomez, Chapter 369, Statutes of 2016), established Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) investment minimums for funding projects located within the boundaries of, and benefiting the individuals living in, disadvantaged communities and low-income communities, or benefiting residents of low-income households. Collectively, these communities are referred to as 'priority populations'. AB 1550 investment minimums apply to the overall appropriations of monies from the GGRF not the individual agency programs. However, all California Climate Investments (CCI) programs are encouraged to maximize benefits to disadvantaged communities, low-income communities and low-income households<sup>3</sup>. Priority populations can be identified using the mapping tools provided by CARB at <https://ww3.arb.ca.gov/cc/capandtrade/auctionproceeds/communityinvestments.htm>.

Grant recipients must attend CDFA-hosted annual meetings. These meetings focus on providing feedback and continuous improvement of CDFA's CSA incentives programs. One in-person meeting is anticipated unless remote meetings are necessary.

### **Technical Assistance Program Objectives**

Grant recipients are required to conduct pre- and post-award activities during the grant agreement term as described below. Grant recipients may also choose to assist CDFA with HSP project verification.

#### *Objective 1: Pre-award technical assistance activities -Required*

Pre-award technical assistance refer to activities conducted prior to a Healthy Soils – Incentives Program or SWEEP applicant receiving a grant award associated with funding allocated in 2022-23. These tasks and activities must include technical assistance provided to farmers and ranchers for application preparation and submission. These activities may further include, but are not limited to, outreach and education about the HSP or SWEEP, project planning and design.

- Grant recipients must assist farmers and ranchers in gathering and preparing HSP and/or SWEEP application materials, including use of program-specific tools as applicable.
- Grant recipients will be required to provide internet and computer access to farmers and ranchers for preparation of their HSP applications. The CSA incentive program solicitations may or may not have overlapping timeframes. If providing assistance to applicants of both CSA programs,

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<sup>3</sup> Although fiscal year 2022-23 funding for HSP and SWEEP is not appropriated from the GGRF, CDFA intends to align Climate Smart Agriculture Technical Assistance program with CCI to the extent feasible.

technical assistance grant recipients should prepare to provide assistance during overlapping timeframes.

- Conducting outreach or application workshops is not required but is encouraged. If choosing to conduct workshops, details such as date, time, location, languages in which assistance will be provided and name and contact information of the workshop lead person must be provided to CDFA two weeks prior to the workshop. This information will be posted on CDFA's CSA program websites and will be publicly available as a resource for those seeking technical assistance. If multiple CSA programs are part of the same workshop, CDFA may request a breakdown of the activities and personnel costs for each program.
- Following the selection of an HSP Incentive or SWEEP project for an award, TAPs may support the agreement execution process by helping agricultural operations to navigate the steps of grant execution.

*Objective 2: Project Implementation technical assistance activities* - Required Project Implementation Technical Assistance Activities refer to activities conducted after a farmer or rancher has received an executed agreement for a Healthy Soils – Incentives Program or SWEEP grant and includes, but are not limited to, ongoing assistance provided to farmers and ranchers with project implementation, project coordination, information gathering and continued education of CSA-relevant topics. Providing implementation technical assistance to HSP and/or SWEEP grant recipients must include, at a minimum:

- Contacting awarded farmers and ranchers in the organization's service area and indicating the organization's role as a technical assistance resource.
- Assisting farmers and ranchers with all activities related to on-farm implementation of project activities including, but not limited to, working with service providers for implementation of healthy soils practices or installation of SWEEP-funded technologies.
- Communicating with vendors and/or facilitating discussion between the farmer/rancher and vendors.
- Assisting in Scope of Work revisions, Budget revisions, and/or Line-Item Shift Requests for on-farm projects.
- Providing invoicing assistance, matching funds coordination and reporting to CDFA. Such assistance may include a variety of activities including, but not limited to, gathering receipts and records of plant species selected, compost analysis reports and soil testing for HSP recipients, gathering SWEEP project component receipts and providing project oversight.
- Providing regular follow-up with farmers and ranchers for their technical assistance needs. For example, assisting in evaluation of alternative choices and availability of allowable plant species for HSP projects.

*Objective 3: Project verification – Optional*

Technical assistance applicants may request funding to assist with HSP practice and/or SWEEP project verification. The activities required for verification include but are not limited to:

- Attend mandatory HSP/SWEEP verification training(s)
- Consult with CDFA HSP/SWEEP program staff to assign projects within TAP service area.
- Communicate with HSP/SWEEP awardee regarding project verification.
- For HSP, review practice implementation guidelines and verification documents requirements in Appendix A of [Healthy Soils – Incentives Program](#) Request for Grant Applications (RGA) document.
- Visit HSP/SWEEP project sites at time of practice or project implementation
- Collect and review documents to verify practice is implemented according to HSP program requirements or project is implemented according to SWEEP grant agreement.
- Complete HSP/SWEEP verification forms or templates as required.
- Submit all documents to assigned HSP/SWEEP program staff.
- Retain verification documents 3 years after agreement expiration date.

In addition to the three primary objectives listed above, several other activities are allowable to provide flexibility to technical assistance providers and to support training and capacity-building within organizations. Technical assistance grant funding may be utilized to:

1. Provide HSP- or SWEEP-relevant technical training to agricultural operation staff.
2. Prepare compelling case-studies noting outcome and benefits of HSP or SWEEP grants.
3. Consult with farmers and ranchers who did not receive funding in previous solicitations and advise them on ways to improve competitiveness of applications.
4. Obtain training related to soil health or irrigation practices for personnel working on the technical assistance.

Climate Smart Agriculture Technical Assistance Grant proposals should limit the estimated budget for these four items combined to no more than 20% of the total grant request.

## **HOW TO APPLY**

The CSA Technical Assistance Program application must be submitted online using CDFA's third-party application portal (AmpliFund). The application materials and a link to application portal can be found at <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oefi/technical/index.html>. Applicants must create a user account to submit a grant application. All applications, supporting



documents, and submissions are subject to public disclosure including posting on the CDFA OEFI website.

CDFA requires information for all entities involved in the CSA Technical Assistance grant proposal, including those that might assist during the solicitation period and/or support workshops. The CSA Technical Assistance grant agreement will be between CDFA and the lead TAP organization. The lead organization must ensure that all required and proposed tasks are fully completed.

The online application process includes the following steps: 1) Opportunity Details, 2) Project Information, 3) Application Forms, 4) Budget Template, 5) Submission. More detailed information on how to apply can be found in [Appendix A: Preview and Navigation of Application Portal](#).

### **Workplan**

The detailed information about the project proposal will be provided in Step 3 of the application process (Application Forms). A questionnaire has been developed to receive information regarding the proposed partnerships, service area, statement of need, qualifications and capacity of the lead organization, and activities that will support the program objectives. Applicants will upload resumes or C.V.s of key personnel from each participating organization and contractors and indicate the role of each person whose resume is attached.

### **Budget Template**

CSA TA applicants will complete a budget template outlining anticipated costs related to Personnel (wages and fringe), Supplies, Equipment, Travel, Other, and Indirect.

Each budget item entered on the budget must support a Project Objective. This will be described within the narrative for each line-item entered. Applicants must clearly describe each participating organization's anticipated expenses, as applicable. All costs must be directly related to and necessary for completion of project. Awarded funds will be paid to the lead organization. The lead organization is responsible for disbursement of funds to other participating organizations and contractors as applicable.

University of California (UC) and California State Universities (CSU) may claim the established indirect cost rate with CDFA. All other eligible organizations for Climate Smart Agriculture technical assistance may claim an indirect cost rate of up to 25 percent of total direct costs.

### Questions and Answers (Q&A)

General questions regarding the solicitation process may be submitted to [cdfa.oefi\\_csa\\_ta@cdfa.ca.gov](mailto:cdfa.oefi_csa_ta@cdfa.ca.gov). Responses to all questions received by email will be posted to CDFA's Technical Assistance website according to the following schedule:

Questions Received By	Responses Provided By
TBD	TBD

TBD at 5:00 p.m. Pacific Time is the final deadline to submit questions for the CSA Technical Assistance grant application. To maintain the integrity of the competitive grant process, CDFA is unable to advise and/or provide individuals with any information regarding specific grant application questions during the solicitation process.

### REVIEW PROCESS

#### Administrative Review

The purpose of the administrative review is to determine whether grant application requirements are met. Grant applications disqualified as a result of the administrative review may be appealed.

During the administrative review, the following will result in the automatic disqualification of a grant application:

- One or more unanswered questions necessary for the administrative or technical review
- Missing, blank, unreadable, or corrupt content
- Unusable or unreadable attachments
- Requests for more than the maximum award amount
- Applications that do not comply with [Eligibility](#) or meet [Program Requirements and Restrictions](#).

**APPEAL RIGHTS:** Any disqualification taken during the administrative review for the preceding reasons may be appealed to CDFA's Office of Hearings and Appeals Office within 10 days of receiving a notice of disqualification from CDFA. The appeal must be in writing and signed by the responsible party named on the submitted grant application. It must state the grounds for the appeal and include any supporting documents and a copy of the CDFA decision being challenged. The submissions must be sent to the California Department of Food and Agriculture, Office of Hearings and Appeals, 1220 N Street, Sacramento, CA 95814 or emailed to [CDFA.LegalOffice@cdfa.ca.gov](mailto:CDFA.LegalOffice@cdfa.ca.gov). If submissions are not received within the time frame provided above, the appeal will be denied.

### Technical Review

CDFA will select the highest scoring applications for award of grant funds. Applications will be scored based on the Scoring Criteria. Technical review will be completed by CDFA’s Office of Environmental Farming and Innovation Climate Smart Agriculture incentive program technical staff. Technical review will be based on the detailed scoring criteria outlined below.

### Scoring Criteria

Each CSA program (HSP and SWEEP) will have its own application questions and will be scored independently.

Criteria	Maximum Points
<p><b>STATEMENT OF QUALIFICATIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are roles of key personnel from each participating organization clearly described?</li> <li>• Does the application clearly identify the staff person or title who will be involved in each task, including alternative or secondary contacts?</li> <li>• Does the project include partnership or regional coordination among multiple organizations?</li> <li>• If a partner organization is indicated, does the partnership provide technical assistance to a larger base of farmers and ranchers than would be accomplished by a single organization?</li> <li>• Is there sufficient information to demonstrate the applicant organization’s capacity to complete the project?</li> <li>• Has the applicant appropriately explained how the education, work history, and/or technical expertise of key personnel makes them qualified for this role?</li> <li>• Do the resumes of individuals listed in the proposal align well with relevant expertise for HSP and/or SWEEP?</li> <li>• Does the organization have ability to provide assistance in languages other than English?</li> </ul>	<p>30</p>
<p><b>STATEMENT OF NEED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the Statement of Need clearly indicate the regions that will be served by the applicant?</li> <li>• Does the Statement of Need clearly detail the organization’s case for serving the region proposed?</li> <li>• Are 25% of the funds allocated for providing assistance to SDFRs? If this target cannot be met, is a detailed and reasonable justification provided?</li> </ul>	<p>20</p>

<p><b>WORKPLAN</b></p> <p><u>Workplan Objectives and Activities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the Workplan include both pre- and post-award activities?</li> <li>• Are reasonable estimates of number of farmers and ranchers the TAP proposes to assist in pre- and post-award activities provided?</li> <li>• Does the Workplan provide sufficient details of all activities proposed?</li> <li>• Does the applicant discuss the plan for conducting outreach and soliciting applications for each incentives program they propose to assist with?</li> <li>• Does the Workplan include adequate details about how the organization will reach SDFRs?</li> <li>• Does the application clearly identify how the organization will prioritize assistance for farms and ranches that are 500 acres or less?</li> </ul> <p><u>Reporting and Evaluation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the application include a detailed reporting and evaluation component?</li> </ul>	<p>25</p>
<p><b>BUDGET</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the costs included in the budget for each task reasonable?</li> <li>• Is the Budget consistent with the Workplan?</li> <li>• Is the division of funds between pre- and post-award activities reasonable?</li> <li>• Is the Workplan achievable with the requested budget?</li> <li>• If bilingual support is indicated within the workplan, does the applicant indicate costs associated with translation?</li> </ul>	<p>25</p>
<p><b>Total Points</b></p>	<p><b>100</b></p>

CDFA will prioritize funding proposals that will provide at least 25 percent of all technical assistance to Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers (SDFRs).

The CSA Technical Assistance program strives to ensure statewide distribution of TAPs to support agricultural operations. Geographic distribution of technical assistance providers may be taken into consideration.

Past performance of TAPs, if applicable, may be taken into consideration during selection. Past performance may include timely and satisfactory completion of funded activities and reporting requirements, data on meeting funding priorities, quantity and quality of past assistance.

### **Notification and Feedback**

All applicants will be notified regarding the status of their grant applications. Successful applicants will receive specific instructions regarding the award process, including information on invoicing and reporting requirements. Applicants not selected for funding will receive feedback regarding their applications within 60 days after receiving notification.

CDFA will post basic information on the CSA Technical Assistance website (<https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oeffi/technical/>) regarding the applications it has received at least 10 days before awarding grant funds. After projects are selected and all funds are encumbered, CDFA will post an updated list of awarded projects on the Climate Smart Agriculture Technical Assistance website. Applications will be treated in accordance with Public Records Act requirements and certain information, subject to those requirements, may be publicly disclosed.

## **AWARD PROCESS**

### **Grant Agreement Execution**

Applicants with projects selected for award of funds will receive a Grant Agreement package with specific instructions regarding award requirements including information on project implementation and payment process. Once a Grant Agreement is executed, grant recipients can begin implementation of the project. Grant recipients are responsible for the overall management of their awarded project to ensure all project activities are completed no later than TBD.

#### **Award Timeline**

<b>Grant Agreement Stage</b>	<b>Estimated Time for Stage Completion</b>
Grant packet is completed – During this step, CDFA will work with awardees to get the information the state needs to execute the grant. The timeline for this step is dependent on how quickly information is provided to CDFA staff.	Variable

Grant Execution	Up to 120 days
Processing advance payments If awardees request and are granted an advance payment, please be aware that it will take up to 4 weeks to process this payment once the grant is executed. (See Payment Process)	Up to 4 weeks

### Reporting

Grant recipients must submit detailed quarterly Progress Reports to CDFA identifying tasks and activities accomplished in the reporting period. CDFA will provide a reporting process and schedule to grant recipients. Progress Reports will include, at a minimum:

- Total number of individuals assisted.
- Information of farmer or rancher assisted including, but not limited to, application identification number (PIN) of submitted application.
- Number of individuals assisted who belong to groups such as SDFRs, AB 1550 Priority Populations and/or farms and ranches 500 acres or less.

For auditing purposes, recipients are required to maintain detailed technical assistance records on-site.

### Payment Process

CDFA will provide grant recipients with the necessary grant award and invoicing documents. Funds will be allocated on a reimbursement basis. Invoices must be submitted quarterly and include all supporting financial documentation to substantiate expenses. No more than \$100,000 may be reimbursed annually. CDFA will withhold 10 percent from the total grant award until a final report is submitted to ensure grant recipients meet all reporting requirements. Invoicing and closeout of all project expenditures must be completed no later than TBD.

### Critical Project Review

Grant recipients must agree to a Critical Project Review and audit during the project term to verify project progress as reported in Progress Reports submitted to CDFA, including number of farmers and ranchers assisted. If it is determined by CDFA from the Critical Project Review that at that time the grant project is not meeting and is unlikely to meet certain milestones, CDFA has the right to terminate the Grant Agreement pursuant to the Terms and Conditions of the Grant Agreement. Termination may result in forfeiture by the grantee of any funds retained pursuant to 10 percent retention policy. Critical Project Review may be completed through an auditing process.

**APPENDIX A: PREVIEW AND NAVIGATION OF APPLICATION PORTAL**  
Under Development