

Water Efficiency Technical Assistance

REQUEST FOR GRANT APPLICATIONS

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

PUBLIC COMMENT WILL BE ACCEPTED THROUGH OCTOBER 15, 2021
AT 5 PM PT AT CDFA.OEFI@CDFA.CA.GOV

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Background and Purpose

The California Department of Food and Agriculture is pleased to announce a competitive grant application process for the Water Efficiency Technical Assistance (WETA) program. The Budget Act of 2021 appropriated \$5 million from the General Fund to CDFA for irrigation water efficiency and nutrient management technical assistance grants. The WETA grant program is designed to facilitate technical assistance to agricultural operations for on-farm water and energy use efficiency and nutrient management.

Funding and Duration

CDFA will award up to \$5 million to eligible organizations.

- The grant term will be 36 months.
- The maximum award amount is \$500,000.
- CDFA reserves the right to offer an award different than the amount requested.
- Funds are distributed on a reimbursement basis following submission of quarterly invoices by the awardee.
- Grant funds may not be expended prior to execution of the grant agreements for awarded projects, or after the completion of the grant agreement term.

Eligibility

The following entities are eligible to apply for WETA grants:

- Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs)
- University of California, California Community Colleges or California State Universities
- Non-profits
- Federally- and California-Recognized Native American Indian Tribes

Entities applying for WETA grants must have demonstrated expertise in on-farm irrigation water and energy use efficiency standards, evaluation and implementation of efficient practices and/or on-farm nutrient management. Lead applicants are encouraged to partner with groundwater sustainability agencies, irrigation districts, and/or water quality coalitions to address local concerns and utilize existing outreach networks.

Program Objectives

The WETA program has three objectives for delivering technical assistance. Applicants may apply for funding to engage in any or all of these objectives:

1. Provide on-farm, one-on-one technical assistance to farmers to evaluate irrigation system efficiency (e.g., mobile irrigation lab) and provide diagnostics, reports and recommendations to growers

In addition to evaluation of irrigation systems, grant recipients may also assist farmers with irrigation water management technology (e.g., soil moisture sensors, evapotranspiration (ET) station information) calibration, data interpretation and training for proper use of technology for irrigation scheduling and monitoring.

2. Coordinate or provide pump efficiency testing for farmers

Grant recipients may support farmers in identifying and scheduling pump testing vendors and provide follow up consultation regarding pump efficiency improvements.

3. Provide training regarding water use efficiency and nutrient management practices and technology

Grant recipients may develop training curriculum and programs related to irrigation water use efficiency and nutrient management. Training may be delivered to farmers through workshops and/or virtual settings. The development of training materials for non-English speakers is a crucial need, including the development of recorded training materials that can be accessed on demand (e.g., webinar). All trainings should produce a certificate of completion which will be provided to individuals who completed the training in full.

Program Requirements and Restrictions

- Grant recipients **may not** charge fees to provide technical assistance to farmers and ranchers. Outreach materials prepared by the grant recipient must indicate that the assistance is free, and no additional 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.
- Grant recipients **must** declare all conflict(s) of interest including sponsorship or funding by any corporation that may profit from CDFA's WETA program.

- An eligible entity **may not** apply as the lead applicant for the WETA program on more than one application per funding cycle.
- Grant recipients **must** prioritize assistance to Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers¹ (SDFRs) and farms and ranches that are 500 acres or less.

Program Timeline

Activity	Tentative Dates*
Application period begins	TBD
Applications due	TBD
Review of applications received	TBD
Announcement of awards	TBD
Execution of grant agreements for awarded projects	TBD

*Subject to change

¹ "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.

How to Apply

Online Application Platform

The Water Efficiency Technical Assistance Program application must be submitted online. The application materials and a link to the 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 Office of Environmental Farming and Innovation (OEFI) website.

CDFA requires information for all entities involved in executing the WETA grant objectives. If awarded, the WETA grant agreement will be between CDFA and the lead applicant organization. The lead organization must ensure that all required and proposed tasks are fully completed.

In addition to completing the online questionnaire, applicants will upload several required attachments including the workplan and budget worksheet and resumes.

Workplan and Budget Worksheet

Applicants will complete and upload a Workplan and Budget Worksheet to identify the objectives, activities, tasks and costs associated with the project. The Workplan and Budget Worksheet (MS Excel file) is available at <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oefi/technical/index.html>. University of California and California State Universities will use Worksheet (MS Excel file) designated for UC and CSU. All other organizations will use the Worksheet (MS Excel file) designated for non-profits and Resource Conservation Districts.

Each budget item entered into the worksheet must support a Program Objective. 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.

Budget Cost Categories

Personnel: Estimate the hourly cost of salary, wages and fringe benefits associated with each activity by individuals employed by the applicant organization.

Contractor: Estimate the cost of work on the project that will be performed by individuals/organizations other than the applicant (e.g., consultants, contractors, partner organizations, etc.). This amount should include all associated salary and wages, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, other, and indirect costs. List the services to be provided and the contractors that will work on the project and be paid with grant funds.

Supplies: Estimate the cost of supplies associated with each activity. Supplies are items with an acquisition cost less than \$5,000 per unit that are used exclusively for the objectives of the project. Categorize the types of supplies to be purchased. General use office supplies (paper, printer ink, pens, etc.), facilities costs (telephone, internet, etc.), and administrative costs are considered indirect and should not be included under Supplies.

Equipment: Estimate the cost of equipment associated with each activity. Equipment is nonexpendable, tangible personal property with a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost which equals or exceeds \$5,000.

Travel: Estimate the cost of project-related travel associated with each activity except contractual personnel. In the description column, describe the travel that will be necessary to accomplish the objectives of the project.

Other: Estimate the cost of all other project related expenses to support each activity. Expenses typically listed under "Other" include registration fees to attend professional education or training, meeting space or equipment rentals, subscriptions, etc. List the specific types of expenses necessary to accomplish the objectives of the project.

Indirect: Indirect costs are facilities and administrative costs that cannot easily be tied directly to the activities of the grant. Examples of common indirect costs include administrative/clerical services, rent, utilities, internet and telephone service, maintenance, and general office supplies. University of California (UC) and California State Universities (CSU) may claim the established indirect cost rate with CDFA. All other eligible organizations may claim an indirect cost rate of 20 percent of total direct costs.

Allowable Costs

Examples of allowable costs include:

- **Personnel and/or Contractor** expenses associated with:

- Conducting on farm water use efficiency audits with the purpose of calculating distribution uniformity (DU) and other efficiency metrics.
- Developing, facilitating, and administering in-person and online irrigation and/or nutrient management trainings for interested parties.
- Coordination of and/or performance of pump tests to identify pumping systems' characteristics including overall pumping efficiency.
- Developing and administering irrigation water management (IWM) system audits to ensure the proper use, function and understanding of technology related to IWM such as flow meters, soil moisture sensors, and/or evapotranspiration sensors.
- Translation services to increase the impact of irrigation efficiency related activities, workshops, and/or trainings.
- Reporting and invoicing.
- Participating in professional development courses and training relevant to the program objectives.
- **Travel Expenses** to farms or training venues including mileage, lodging and per diem.
- **Supplies and/or Equipment** needed for irrigation system or pump evaluation or training including computers, software and vehicle renting or leasing.

Unallowable Costs

Examples of unallowable costs include but are not limited to:

- Personnel or contractor hours that are not related to water efficiency and/or nutrient management evaluation, audits, training, administration, or other non-related fields.
- Completion of tasks that are outside of approved workplan and budget
- Assisting farmers or ranchers as they apply for or implement CDFA Climate Smart Agriculture grant projects (SWEEP, HSP, or AMMP).
- Research
- Food/drinks and entertainment

Resumes

Upload resumes of key personnel from each participating organization and contractors and indicate the role of each person whose resume is attached.

Provide in PDF format. Resumes must provide evidence of expertise in irrigation water use efficiency and nutrient management.

Questions and Answers (Q&A)

During the application period, CDFA will host an informational webinar to provide an overview of program guidelines and application materials. Visit the CDFA OEFI technical assistance website for more information and to register for the webinar.

General questions regarding the solicitation process may be submitted to cdfa.oefi_csa_ta@cdfa.ca.gov. Responses to all questions received by email will be posted to CDFA's Technical Assistance website according the following schedule:

Questions Received By:	Responses Provided By:
TBD	TBD

TBD, 2021 at 5:00 p.m. PT is the final deadline to submit questions for the 2021 Water Efficiency 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

Applications will be reviewed in a two-stage process:

Administrative Review

The purpose of the administrative review is to determine whether grant application requirements are met. During the administrative review, the following will result in the automatic disqualification of a grant application:

- Incomplete grant applications: applications with one or more unanswered questions necessary for administrative or technical review.
- Incomplete grant applications: applications with missing, blank, unreadable, corrupt, or otherwise unusable attachments.
- Applications that include activities outside the grant duration.
- Applications with unallowable costs or activities necessary to complete the project objectives.
- 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 name on the 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. If submissions are not received within the time frame provided above, the appeal will be denied.

Technical Review

Technical review will be completed by CDFA staff in the Office of Environmental Farming and Innovation. Technical review will be based on the detailed scoring criteria outlined below. CDFA will select highest scoring applications for award of grant funds.

Scoring Criteria

Criteria	Maximum Points
<p>Workplan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the estimated number of farmers the applicant proposes to assist provided and reasonable? • Does the applicant provide sufficient details of all activities proposed? • Does the workplan include in-field irrigation water efficiency assessments to farmers/ranchers? • Does the applicant discuss their plan for conducting outreach and identifying farmers for assistance? • Are the activities achievable with the requested budget? • Does the application include a detailed reporting and evaluation component? • Does the applicant clearly indicate the regions that will be served by the applicant? • Does the applicant clearly detail the organization’s case for serving the region proposed? • Does the applicant propose to provide assistance in languages other than English? • Does the application clearly identify how the organization will prioritize assistance for farms and ranches that are 500 acres or less? 	<p>40</p>
<p>Statement of Qualifications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the SOQ clearly identify the capacity of the lead applicant organization to provide water efficiency technical assistance? • Has the applicant adequately explained how the education, work history, and/or technical expertise of key personnel makes them qualified for this role? • Will the organization need to hire or contract lead technical assistance providers? • Are roles of key personnel from each participating organization clearly described? 	<p>30</p>

Criteria	Maximum Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the application clearly identify the staff person or personnel who will be involved in each task, including alternative or secondary contacts? • Does the project include partnership or regional coordination among multiple organizations? • 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? • Do the resumes of individuals listed in the proposal align well with relevant expertise 	
<p>Budget</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the proposed budget outline all anticipated expenses? • Is the budget at or below the maximum award? • Are the costs included in the budget for each activity reasonable? • Is the Budget consistent with the Workplan? • Is the division of funds between activities reasonable? 	20
<p>Prioritization of Assistance to SDFRs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are 25% of the funds allocated for providing assistance to SDFRs? • Does the Workplan include adequate details about how the organization will reach SDFRs? • Does the budget clearly identify costs dedicated to assistance to SDFRs? 	10
Total	100

Past performance of applicants in OEFI programs, if applicable, may be taken into consideration during selection. Past performance may include timely and satisfactory completion of funded activities and reporting requirements.

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 Technical Assistance website (<https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oefi/technical/>) regarding the applications 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. Applications will be treated in accordance with Public Records Act requirements and certain information, subject to those requirements, may be publicly disclosed.

Grant Recipient Information

Grant Agreement

Applicants 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**.

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 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**.

Reporting

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

- Total number of individuals assisted.
- Information of farmers assisted.
- Number of individuals assisted who identify as SDFRs and/or farms 500 acres or less.
- Costs associated with assisting SDFRs.
- Number of irrigation assessments conducted.
- Total number of irrigation water management (IWM) assessments conducted.
- Total number of pump efficiency tests conducted.
- Total attendance at in-person and online water efficiency and/or nutrient management workshops and trainings.
- Links and or files for digital training materials that have been created.
- Links to translated files or digital training materials that have been created.

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

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 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. If the grant is terminated and has incurred any costs during the term, the Grantee must return any previously reimbursed funds. 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.

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Appendix A: Preview of Application Questionnaire

Under Development