

Best Management Practices for Grant Programs



CALIFORNIA
NATURAL
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AGENCY

Monitoring & Stewardship Unit

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1. INTRODUCTION

As part of its ongoing efforts to provide useful technical assistance to Grant Program Managers and staff supporting grant management, the Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) has developed this guide, illustrated with “Best Practices” drawn from “real world” examples. The Natural Resources Agency Monitoring & Stewardship Unit (MSU) interviewed Grant Program Managers from various Departments of the Natural Resources Agency and reviewed dozens of files of completed projects funded through Proposition 84 and 1. This document describes the combination of skills and knowledge that characterize effective grants management, provides best practice examples currently used by existing Departments that can provide support, and offer grant administrators (project administrators) ways to identify their own strengths and opportunities to improve.

Who is this document for?

This document is intended for the personnel responsible for grant management including grant program managers, project managers, accounting staff, and project compliance monitors.

The contents of this document is intended to serve as a guide to grant programs to enhance productivity, increase efficiency and describe the basic components of a grant program with the goal of fewer administrative surprises and better coordination. Though the best management practices described here target grant program managers specifically, implementation of best management practices discussed in this paper is expected to improve the project management skills of grant staff members generally. The best practices guide is designed to be adaptable to a diversity of programs, updating it as necessary to ensure it remains useful and relevant as program objectives and priorities change.

What is a “Best Practice?”

A best management practice is a method or technique that has consistently shown results superior to those achieved through other means and can be established as a productivity benchmark. Best practices identified here are those that managers can use to effectively achieve program objectives and preferred outcomes. Managers may currently have incorporated similar practices however, we encourage grant managers to contact us and describe those practices not included here, but have been shown to improve work-flow, efficiency, job satisfaction and happier grantees.

The best management practices we suggest here are not necessarily best suited for every Department, and every situation will change as individuals find better ways to reach a desired outcome. The term itself may be interpreted as having different meaning and application according to the specific Office and program. For some, best practice refers to a custom, or habit of completing tasks consistently, while for others, best practice is ensuring project administrators use the same templates and software. Most project administrators already have best management practices in place they just don't know it because it was not developed by someone outside the Department, then implemented through training of program staff. Project administrators have their way of doing things even if those methods are not formal within the department. This “way of doing things” can be considered a best practice; a hybrid practice that combines standards and cumulative experience.

How should this document be used?

The best practices were developed to supplement the [Bond Accountability Guide](#), an existing [policy and procedures manual](#) (*Currently being updated*) and provide real world examples project managers can apply to improve efficiency and create a uniform standard resilient to audit review. It is important to point out that sound program management is the result of careful, deliberate, and often complex work. Review these best practices alone and with the grant team and plan specific steps to address those areas where improvement may be warranted. Although this document places an emphasis on bond funded programs, this guide, and the best management practices discussed, is intended to be adaptable to non-bond funded programs as well. The areas of focus follow the typical sequence of a grant program up to the point of award recommendations. Once awards are made and project management begins, refer to your policy and procedures manual for grant administration. If you do not have one at this time, you can refer to CNRA's existing Policy and Procedures manual linked above and published to the sharepoint site. This document is organized according to the following main categories characteristic of most grant programs.

- Guidelines
- Public outreach
- Application process
- Environmental Review
- Developing grant agreement
- Additional Requirements

2. PROGRAM GUIDELINES

One of the first steps to getting a grant program up and running is to develop program guidelines. The purpose of guidelines is to support implementation of the program and provide clear direction on how something should be done. They describe the general process, procedures and criteria used to implement the grant program. If it is a new program, guidelines should be circulated for a minimum 30-day comment period using a department administered list-serve or email list of previous and potential applicants and technical staff. The list serve is publicly accessible on a department website for anyone that wishes to receive information about a program, including request for proposal notices, release of guidelines and workshop information, which will be discussed further in the Application Process section. Additional methods of communicating program information including guidelines are via stakeholder groups, agency website and social media platforms as appropriate. Recurring programs with minor changes to guidelines generally do not require re-circulation, however, a list-serve can communicate those minor changes prior to conducting workshops so applicants are better prepared. Although programs have differing objectives, the guidelines reviewed from several departments share a similar structural outline and The following components:

- Funding Overview
- Eligibility Requirements
- Selection Process and Scoring Criteria
- Project Administration

2.1 FUNDING OVERVIEW

Funds may be allocated to statewide programs or designed to flow to specific geographic units, watersheds, or mitigation type. The funding overview introduces the program's origin and enabling legislation. It identifies the funding authority and allocation of department funds to achieve specific program objectives. A funding overview promotes transparency and allows the reader to reference the statutory language via a publicly available URL or web link. Some examples from different programs are illustrated below in Figures 1, 2 and 3.

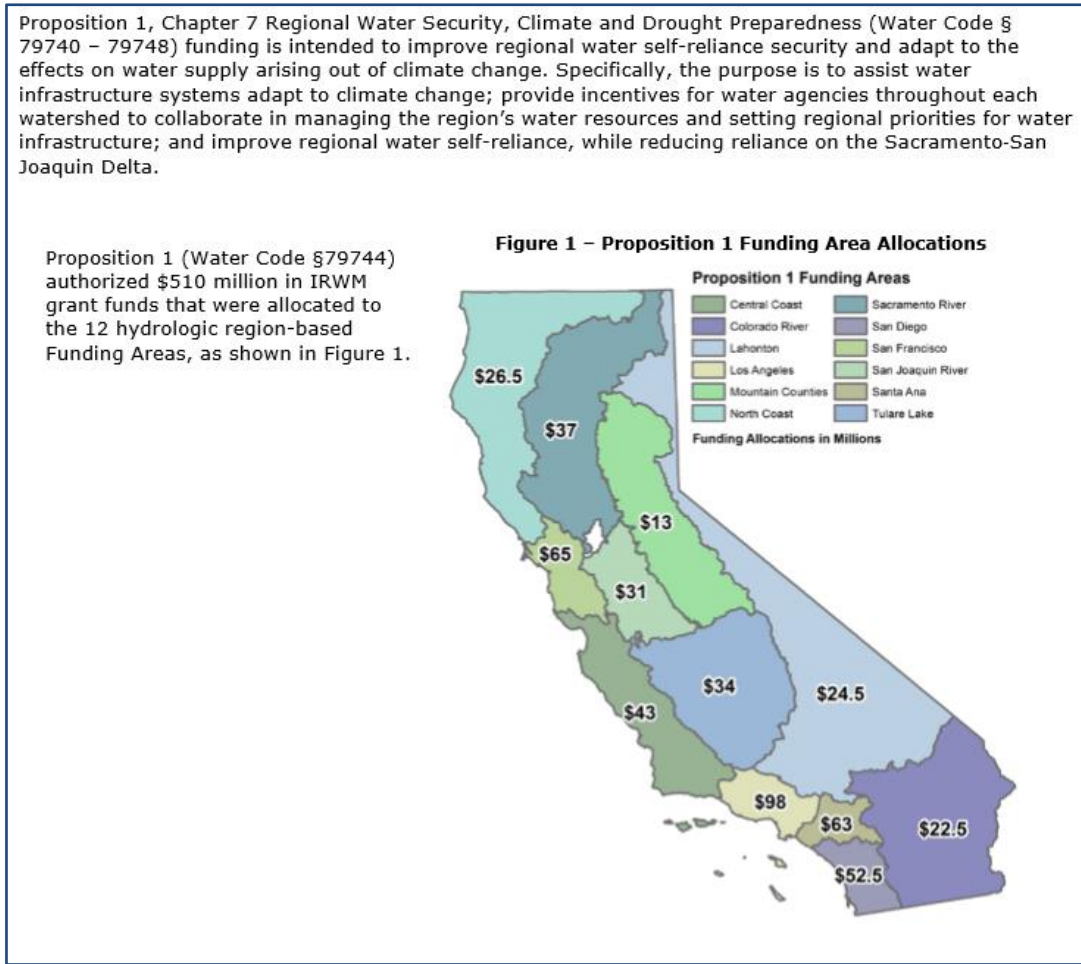


Figure 1 – Distribution of IRWM funding allocations from Prop 1 across each of the 12 Prop 1 funding regions.

Proposition 84 - Parks/Water (2006) \$5.38 Billion
 For more information, download the [Allocation Balance Report](#) (As of July 29, 2021.)

PROPOSITION 84 BOND LANGUAGE ✕

SECTION 1. Division 43 Public Resources Code:
 DIVISION 43. THE SAFE DRINKING WATER, WATER QUALITY AND SUPPLY, FLOOD CONTROL, RIVER AND COASTAL PROTECTION BOND ACT OF 2006
 CHAPTER 1. GENERAL PROVISIONS

- Proposition 1
- Proposition 1E
- Proposition 12
- Proposition 40
- Proposition 50
- Proposition 68
- Proposition 84**

Figure 2 - Proposition 84, the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Bond Act of 2006 (Pub. Resources Code, Section 75050 et seq.).

Funding Authority

SJFPEP: Proposition 13, the Costa-Machado Water Act of 2000 (Water Code, Section 79000 et seq.), authorizes DWR to fund projects that enhance native fish populations and reduce their vulnerability to water diversions at all life stages within or upstream of the Delta in the San Joaquin River Basin.
https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=79190.&lawCode=WAT and http://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180SB840 .

USRP: Proposition 84, the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Bond Act of 2006 (Pub. Resources Code, Section 75050 et seq.); and Proposition 68, the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for all Act of 2018 (Pub. Resources Code, Section 80100 et seq.), authorize funding for the Urban Streams Restoration Program.
https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=75050.&lawCode=PRC and https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180SB85

Chapter 3.5 (commencing with Section 11340) of Part 1 of Division 3 of Title 2 of the Government Code does not apply to the development and adoption of these guidelines and selection criteria. As such, the existing regulations for the Urban Streams Restoration Program found in California Code of Regulations, Title 23, Division 2, Chapter 2.4 (Sections 451.1–451.6, inclusive) are hereby rescinded and replaced with these guidelines and criteria.

Figure 3 - Proposition 68, the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for all Act of 2018 (Pub. Resources Code, Section 80100 et seq.), authorize funding for the Urban Streams Restoration program.

Regardless of program objectives, the funding source, and total amount available to award for a solicitation is transparent. In addition, information regarding minimum and maximum grant award amounts, local match, or cost-share requirements should be clearly stated. Funding priorities such as disadvantaged communities are generally communicated in this section or in the eligibility section below.

Funding BMP's:

- 1. Include funding source information with link to bond language.**
- 2. Include amount available to award and maximum/minimum grant amounts.**
- 3. Reference bond language via link.**

2.2 ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility often varies across programs and is a frequently asked question among potential grant applicants. The main point is that the guidelines are clear about which entities are eligible to submit a proposal for funding. In addition, funding programs may have statutory requirements, funding priorities that specifically target a geographic region, or type of project. For example, one that is aligned with an existing management, or recovery plan, provides public access, targets low income and disadvantaged communities or issues regarding environmental justice.

Feedback from previous workshops has informed us that providing examples of the types of projects, or project features that are eligible, and/or ineligible is helpful to an applicant's understanding of the overall program objectives, and expenses eligible for reimbursement, thus minimizing uncertainty about an applicant's proposal prior to submittal ([Figure 4.](#)). If for example, a funding program does not pay for mitigation for an unrelated project, or planting palm trees, planting trees larger than 15-gallon, etc., it is good form to communicate this through program guidelines and reiterated during outreach activities.

In addition, multiple-objective projects are key to capturing the greatest number of environmental and public benefits. Provide examples in the guidelines of multiple benefit projects that have been competitive in previous grant cycles or simply reflect the values of the program ([Figure 5.](#)). This practice generally results in more competitive proposals better synced with the overall goals of the program and contain fewer ineligible project expenses.

Sample Eligible and Ineligible Projects (River Parkways program)

Figure 4

<p>Eligible Projects - The items below provide examples of project elements that meet statutory conditions for the River Parkways program. (This is <u>not</u> a comprehensive list.)</p>	<p>Ineligible Projects/Applications – The items below provide examples of projects and elements NOT funded under this program. (This is <u>not</u> a comprehensive list.)</p>
<p>Promote Groundwater Recharge and Water Reuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create or expand green alleys that moderate storm water runoff, detain water in catchments like rain gardens, enhance infiltration, increase residence time, and mitigate localized flooding. • Create green-streets that allow stormwater to flow into vegetated planters, or vegetated bio-swales. • Replace impermeable surface materials (e.g. concrete) with permeable materials, or open void materials that promote infiltration and reuse and attenuate peak flows. • Disconnect downspout and install rain barrels, or cisterns for storage. • Create or enhance existing wetlands, recharge ponds. • Convert irrigation to recycled water. <p>Reduce Energy Consumption</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand urban forest to increase shade and decrease ambient temperatures around buildings and alleys (urban heat island feedback). • Install green roofs, or green/living walls. • Remove pavement and increase vegetative cover <p>Use Soils, Plants, and Natural Processes to Treat Runoff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create or enhance existing wetlands, or riparian zones. • Install vegetated bio-swales, depressed planters, or rain gardens with a native plant landscape system to capture and infiltrate stormwater and increase residence times to treat non-point pollution. • Reduce impermeable surfaces by removing concrete and increasing stormwater planter area and bulb-outs, or curb extensions. • Expand urban forest to intercept stormwater promoting infiltration and bio-remediate pollutants. (<i>Mature existing trees should influence how and where stormwater facilities like bio-swales or planters are designed.</i>) <p>Create, or Restore Native Habitat</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove exotic and/or invasive plants along stream corridors that damage habitat and compete with native plant communities for water resources. • Restore or enhance riparian, aquatic, and terrestrial habitat. • Improve/enhance ecological function of riverine, riparian, aquatic, or upland habitats. • Acquire resource lands including agriculture and forested. • Improve ecosystems beyond mitigation to include species recovery. <p>Increase Regional and Local Resiliency and Adaptability to Climate Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide habitat connectivity to allow species a better chance to adapt and habitats to survive. • Expand the urban forest to reduce heat island effects and provide air and water benefits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects with no urban watershed or urban river benefit. • Projects that include acquisition of property that cannot be purchased at fair market value. • Planning only, or operations and maintenance projects. • Programmatic projects, such as education and outreach. • Projects that exclusively fulfill mitigation requirements. • Projects that will not be completed in the allotted timelines. • Bridges. • Dredging behind dams to reduce siltation, or other purposes. • Renovation/restoration of structures on converted riverfront land. • Development projects contingent on future acquisition for project implementation. • Projects that include both acquisition and development (project must be one or the other, not both.) • Projects that attempt to meet statutory conditions with landscaping instead of restoration. • Projects that are intended to correct problems caused by inadequate maintenance. • Applications that include more than one project. • Projects with multiple sites that are not included under one environmental review.

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Figure 5

EXAMPLES OF PROJECT TYPES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE REDUCTION OF GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS AND PROVIDE MULTIPLE BENEFITS	BENEFITS ASSOCIATED WITH PROJECT TYPE					
	Decrease in air and/or water pollution	Reduction in the consumption of natural resources and energy	Increase in the reliability of local water supplies	Increased adaptability to climate change	Public Health	Community Revitalization
Establish or enhance:						
Tree Canopy/Shade Trees	X	X	X	X	X	X
Urban forestry/forest	X	X	X	X	X	X
Local parks and open space	X	X	X	X	X	X
Greening of existing public lands and structures, including schools	X	X	X	X	X	
Multi-objective storm water projects, including construction of permeable surfaces and collection basins and barriers	X	X	X	X	X	X
Urban streams, including restoration	X		X	X		X
Community, demonstration, or outdoor education gardens or orchards		X		X	X	X
Urban heat island mitigation and energy conservation efforts through landscaping and green roof projects	X	X	X	X	X	X
Non-motorized urban trails that provide safe routes for both recreation and travel between residences, workplaces, commercial centers, and schools		X			X	X
Bioswales and rain gardens to mitigate stormwater runoff	X		X	X		
Conservation easements or fee title acquisitions to preserve in perpetuity land for agricultural uses, open space, wetlands, etc.	X	X	X		X	X
Capture, store and infiltrate stormwater for ground water recharge and use	X	X	X	X	X	
Wetlands	X		X	X		

Eligibility BMP's:

- 1. Clarify which entities are eligible to receive grant funds under the program.**
- 2. Provide examples of the types of multi-benefit projects that are a good fit for the program.**
- 3. Provide examples of project features or amenities that are potentially ineligible for reimbursement. For example, car bridges, street resurfacing, or 24" box trees.**

2.3 SCORING & SELECTION PROCESS

Project Selection is generally conducted through a competitive process. Proposals are evaluated for completeness, eligibility, and technical merit with input from a technical review committee and ranked according to established scoring criteria. An overview of this process and examples of scoring criteria from existing and previous grant programs are provided below. It is recommended to be published in the guidelines.

Based in part on the technical evaluation, recommendations and available funds, a program manager submits recommendations of grant awards for the highest ranked proposals. However, a recommendation for award may not be based solely on highest score.

Other Funding Considerations

In evaluating projects, scores are used to determine initial rankings and facilitate discussions for each proposal. To achieve equitable distribution of funds, the State may consider additional factors including, but not limited to, economic benefits, statewide significance, geographic distribution of funds, previous grant performance, existing grants, disadvantaged community status, and other potential project benefits, as well as feasibility to accept partial funding. After a technical review of the proposal and subsequent site visit, program staff may want to consider a project be partially funded. Partial funding can be a helpful discretionary tool for program managers, particularly when a project has construction elements or features that are potentially ineligible pursuant to the program. As stated in the previous section however, being clear about ineligible project features in the guidelines and during public outreach events can reduce the frequency of ineligible expenses being included in a proposal, which in turn can impact an applicant's project evaluation score.

The section below provides a general overview of the process for project review, evaluation, and selection. The grant review team, which generally consists of administrative and technical staff, reviews all timely submittals. Information contained in the grant application is considered confidential until the grant awards are announced.

Process Overview

1. Applicants submit a complete grant application package to the State by the deadline.
2. Applications are reviewed for completeness and eligibility.
3. Applications are evaluated using an established criteria and additional funding considerations (e.g. statutory requirements, or program priorities).
4. Site visits are scheduled prior to funding decisions.
5. Proposals are recommended for funding.
6. Final funding decisions are determined and announced.

Figures 6 and 7 below provide examples of scoring criteria from existing and previous Urban Greening and River Parkway grant programs. Typically, a grant review team evaluates each grant application based on established criteria which reflect and support program priorities and is transparent to applicants.

Figure 6

Criteria	Points
1. Project Requirements/Statutory Conditions	30
2. Community, Non Profit and/or Government Agency Support and Collaboration	30
3. Public Access, Location, and Transportation	15
4. Organizational Capacity & Project Sustainability	15
5. Project Readiness	15
6. Additional Project Characteristics and Multiple Benefits	10
7. Other Sources of Funds & In-Kind Contributions	5
Total Points Possible	120

Figure 7

1. Statutory Requirements	0 – 30
Project uses Natural Systems, Mimics Natural Systems or Expands Green Spaces	
Project provides Multiple Benefits	
Project consistent with State's Planning Priorities	
Project reduces Greenhouse Gas Emissions	
Total Possible for Statutory Requirements – 30	
2. Statutory Priorities (Must meet one or more)	0 – 25
Interagency Cooperation and Integration/Collaboration (up to 13)	
Uses Existing Public Lands and Facilitates Use of Public Resources and Investments including Schools (up to 5)	
Disadvantaged Community OR (automatic 4 points)	
Severely Disadvantaged Community (automatic 7 points)	
Total Possible for Urban Greening Priorities – 25	
3. Urban Greening Additional Priorities and Public Access	0 – 25
Project Improves Public Health	
Project is Innovative and/or Creative	
Project is Proposed by a Community More Vulnerable to Climate Change or addresses an Environmental Justice Issue	
Extent of Public Access (as feasible)	
Total Possible for Program Objectives – 25	
4. Project Readiness	0 – 10
5. Organizational Capacity	0 – 10

BMP's:

- 1. Provide an overview of the proposal evaluation process and scoring criteria in the guidelines.**
- 2. Consider partial funding when appropriate. Some projects have the potential to produce multiple benefits, but also contain ineligible budget items that grant funds cannot pay for.**

2.4 PROJECT ADMINISTRATION

Similar to the selection process above, it is a good practice to provide applicants an overview of the project administration process that begins when a project has been recommended for funding and receives an award notice. This includes developing and executing a grant funding agreement to conducting a final inspection.

General Overview of Grant Management Process after a Grant has been Awarded

1. State sends grant agreement and materials for project grant administration to grantee. (See **Cost Estimate 4.4 below**).
2. Grantee signs and returns all required copies to the State.
3. For acquisitions, grantee submits appraisal, purchase documents, etc., for Department of General Services' review. Applicable State appraisal review fees are an eligible cost.
4. Grantee commences preliminary work (planning, design, permitting, CEQA, etc.) on the project and submits requests for reimbursements, as applicable.
5. Grantee submits final site plan, timeline and cost/budget estimate (as applicable) for State review prior to commencing with construction.
6. Grantee submits CEQA compliance documentation together with evidence that the lead agency notified the appropriate California Native American tribe of the proposed action, if applicable.
7. Grantee posts signs acknowledging source of funds (as applicable).
8. Grantee commences construction work on the project and may submit payment requests for reimbursement of eligible project expenditures.
9. The State may schedule periodic on-site visits and request periodic progress reports from the Grantee.

10. Grantee completes project and submits project completion documents to the State, including deeds and deed restrictions as applicable.
11. State conducts a final project inspection of the project and approves final payment including retention amounts withheld over the course of the grant.
12. The grant may be audited during the course of the project and for three years after the project is completed.

BMP's:

- 1. Provide an overview of the administrative process after a grant proposal is awarded funds.**

3. PUBLIC OUTREACH

Previous experience with public outreach has demonstrated that applicants who attend a technical assistance workshop, or who have an opportunity to discuss their proposal with a grant manager, technical reviewer, or grant administrator generally submit more competitive, and complete applications. In addition, public workshops can help to address questions and provide general assistance to applicants in preparing their proposals. Dates and locations, including virtual options of the workshops are posted to the departmental website and announced via electronic mailing list or a department administered list-serve, stakeholder groups, agency website or other social media platforms as appropriate. Ultimately the success of any project depends on the details and how they are implemented. Outreach provides an opportunity for applicants to receive feedback about project specifics, or technical features.

Workshops can save an applicant significant time and effort by requesting a preliminary assessment of their proposal as a "good fit" for the program and offered general discussion ideas about how to make their proposal more competitive. This in turn can save the granting agency time reviewing proposals that may not be well aligned with the priorities of the funding program, are incomplete or are otherwise less competitive. Given the number of programs running concurrently by various Offices, outreach and workshops can help to inform applicants of other state programs that may be better suited for their project type and be directed accordingly.

Additional advantages of an outreach program prior to a request for proposals is to introduce program guidelines and answer specific questions about the goals of the program and the types of projects being sought. This is also a good opportunity to reiterate the financial realities of a reimbursement grant program to applicants who are relatively new to the grant world or are less experienced with state grant programs specifically. A reimbursement grant program can put significant financial pressure on a grantee if they are not prepared. The timeline for paying a sub-

contractor, then submitting the invoice to the state for reimbursement and receiving a check can be up to ninety (90) days. One potential solution is to encourage local non-profits and community groups to partner with municipalities, or special districts who have the fiscal and organizational capacity to continue operations uninterrupted while reimbursement is pending. In this scenario the municipality or district would serve as the grantee while the non-profit would fulfill the role as a sub-contractor and invoice the city or district directly. Partnerships between local non-profits, community groups and local agencies has demonstrated the power of local partnerships to lift communities as part of a community driven process.

The appropriate number of workshops to hold is somewhat subjective and likely dependent on the program, however if it is a statewide program not limited to a specific geographic area, an even distribution of workshops across the state is preferred.

Native American/Tribal Entities

For projects that affect tribal communities, Grantees will be required to show meaningful outreach and attempt to collaborate with local California Native American tribes through the implementation of their project.

Meaningful outreach includes, but is not limited to, writing letters and emails, and following with phone calls updating the tribe throughout the life of the project, inviting tribal leadership to attend planning meetings, and meeting with local tribal government lead consortiums or other inter-tribal governmental organizations. Collaborating with local California Native American tribes can include developing the project with tribal leadership, ensuring the project provides benefits to the local tribe and its membership, and providing contracting opportunities to local tribes and their members where appropriate.

BMP's:

- 1. Technical and administrative assistance via workshops.**
- 2. Promote partnerships that empowers community organizations and builds working relationships between local agencies and non-profits.**
- 3. Maintain electronic mailing list or list-serve.**
- 4. Review the reimbursement nature of grants,**

4. THE APPLICATION PROCESS

The state has moved towards a paperless system for grant proposals. A web-based application system offers advantages for both the applicant and granting Office and reduces resource consumption. The advantage to the applicant is that work can be saved electronically, then resumed at the applicant's leisure. In addition, if the online application system goes live

approximately the same time the guidelines become available (which is preferable), the applicant can immediately begin using the system to prepare their proposal submittal.

The advantage to the granting Office of course is that it obviates the need for multiple copies of paper proposals to organize, store and keep track of. The proposals can be evaluated remotely by a technical review team and the review sheets configured to a specific scoring guide. In addition, if an Office is administering multiple programs at once, each program can be accessed by a simple drop-down-menu.

CNRA currently uses the System for Online Application Review ([SOAR](#)). [Figures 9, 10, 11 and 12](#) below show the login page, main menu and evaluation pages. [Figure 10](#) is representative of the multi-page drop down menu administrative and technical reviewer's access to review proposals or assignments. Each grant program in the drop-down menu contains scoring instructions and a scoring sheet. Program managers develop instructions or prompts and scoring criteria consistent with the statutory and program requirements and priorities. Additional considerations may include other project characteristics such as readiness, innovation, or multiple benefits. SOAR is a relatively simple program to navigate and upload documents and is compatible with Apple products, or web browser's other than Internet Explorer. It is unknown at this time if non-compatibility issues will be addressed in the future. Additional examples of scoring criteria and format can be found in the *Scoring and Selection Process* section above.

Additionally, while there are potentially many different approaches to the intake, evaluation and ultimately selection of proposals for funding, CNRA is currently using a four-tier process that has overall been successful and supported by feedback received from applicants and grantees.

The Costs and Benefits of Concept Proposals

In previous years request for proposals required the submittal of a complete application package, which included significant documentation. However, this placed a heavy burden on applicants generally and particularly organizations with limited capacity. In addition, the project type may have been better suited for a different funding program, or applicants would have benefited from technical assistance.

In an attempt to lessen that burden and provide a more equitable process overall, a maximum two-page, project concept proposal was implemented to modify the existing process on a trial basis. This modified work-flow had the advantage of allowing applicants to get a preliminary assessment of their project by administrative and technical staff prior to filing an application. It allowed staff to identify proposals that were better suited for an alternative program, saving applicants valuable time and duplicate effort. It also expanded lines of communication between applicants and staff who were available by phone, or email and had the unintended consequence of allowing administrative staff to be exposed to a wider range of project types for edification. Applicants in turn were better informed about how to use the program guidelines and where to find answers to their questions.

However, the concept proposal trial was ended after a year for several reasons. It soon became apparent that direct communication with administrative staff regarding program requirements and process related questions did not require an informal concept proposal. In effect the phone had supplanted it and was preferable from an administrative perspective. In addition, the concept

process required recruiting technical staff early in the process and often again later as the process matured. This put additional pressure on technical reviewers whose schedules were already busy managing their own programs, and on administrative staff for coordinating the proposals with available reviewers. Finally, the concept proposal often lacked sufficient detail to assess the project's environmental or public benefits, nor was it clear how helpful this was to applicants, which brings us to current.

The hybrid process used currently at CNRA has four steps with each building on the previous step.



Figure 8

4.1 WHAT TO SUBMIT

A review of guidelines from various Offices reveals some variation in the suite of forms and information collected as one might expect since Grant Programs have different statutory conditions and priorities. There is general agreement however that at a minimum a submittal should contain the following:

Step 1

In the first step, applicants submit an application that includes the following documentation:

- Signature page that includes applicant information, grant funds requested, total project cost project description and certification statement (signed by person authorized in the draft resolution or designee)
- Project description/scope of work
- Statement of project purpose (What problem or issue(s) will the project address)
- Community Engagement Plan
- Cost Estimate
- Draft resolution to receive grant funds
- Photographs
- Location and Assessor's parcel map
- Site Plan (development projects only)
- CEQA Compliance
- Evidence of Willing Seller Letter (acquisitions only)

The core information collected during Step 1 has demonstrated to be sufficient for reviewers to evaluate the critical features and suite of benefits of a proposal to apply scoring criteria. It also reduces the amount of time and effort required to prepare an application and provide administrative review. Projects that score above a minimum threshold typically advance to Step 2-walking the project site. In addition, it is a good practice to visit more projects than there are funds to award. This provides a buffer to the natural attrition process, such as projects that lack site control, or received funding through another source, or a property owner who changes his/her mind about selling their property. As one project 'falls out', another can be considered for funding.

Due to travel restrictions or other precautions, site visits may continue to be conducted in a virtual 'zoom-like' format. However, it is important to note that site visits remain a vital part of the project selection process. It is not only an opportunity for a granting office to ask questions about project specifics, site-visits provide context such as surrounding land uses and they reveal constraints that may not be as obvious in attachments. It is also an opportunity to assess community involvement or support and cohesiveness of project partners. Plus, the total merits of a project or strength of an organization is not always reflected accurately in an application.

Step 2

Some useful recommendations and role of the grant administrator coordinating the site visit.

- Are there any changes in scope, budget, etc.?
- Have applicant identify where/how public access if applicable
- Safety issues or possible easements/encroachments?
- Other funding sources still secured?
- Ask if any opposition to project?
- Discuss concerns/questions brought up by committee member
- Type of program (reimbursements)
- Address any issues discovered and inform applicant before leaving site as to any actions.

- Recap all issues discussed or follow up items/materials needed at end of visit and date due.
- Check with technical review member as to any outstanding questions, issues, etc.
- Take notes of questions/answers.
- Take pictures during visit.
- Encourage answers to be repeated for the entire group to hear.
- Would they be willing to accept partial funding?

Step 3

Projects that advance to Step 3 are subject to remaining documentation. This generally includes:

- Signed authorized resolution
- Eligibility for non-profits (e.g. 501 C3)
- Workplan
- Final budget
- Property data sheet (for all parcels included in the project)
- Plant palette (species and quantity)
- *Proof of ownership (assessor records, deeds, title report)
- *Proof of site control if not owner (permission to access, develop and maintain project site)
- Operations & maintenance agreement (if performed by an organization other than the applicant)
- Permit approval status
- Draft conservation easement (**acquisitions only**)
- Appraisal if available (**acquisitions only**)
- Preliminary title report (**acquisitions only**)

** If not available at this time, request a letter from property owners or entity performing operations and maintenance at a minimum. If awarded, include a special provision in the grant agreement that no funds will be released until we have copy of executed agreements.*

Examples of operations and maintenance agreements will be published to CNRA's website.

LOG ONTO SOAR

Username: **Password :** **LOG ONTO SOAR**

Note: The username and password are case-sensitive.

RETRIEVE PASSWORD **CREATE ACCOUNT** **PUBLIC SEARCH TOOL** **USER MANUAL**

WELCOME TO SOAR

The System for Online Application Review (SOAR) allows potential funding recipients to apply for grant and loan funding offered by California Natural Resources Agency.

California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) is responsible for administering the SOAR system. California Natural Resources Agency Mission: To restore, protect and manage the state's natural, historical and cultural resources for current and future generations using creative approaches and solutions based on science, collaboration and respect for all the communities and interests involved.

NEED HELP? CONTACT SOAR HELP DESK
The SOAR Help Desk is staffed Monday - Friday (9:00 AM - 4:00 PM).

Please direct your questions to:
916-653-6138 or SOAR.ADMIN@resources.ca.gov

If you are experiencing problems with SOAR, please provide the following information:

- Name of the funding program you are applying to;
- A short description of the problem (including where in the application the problem is occurring);
- Proposal Identification Number (PIN) assigned to the application; and
- A screen shot of the error received (if applicable).

The system for Online Application Review allows applicants to upload documents and submit applications, while also allowing grant administrators and technical review teams to review and evaluate project proposals. In addition, there is a help desk for applicants. Once logged in technical reviewers can easily navigate to their assignments.

Figure 10

CA.GOV natural resources
SOAR - System for Online Application Review

Welcome Brad Juarez to California Natural Resources Agency. If this is not your Account, please log out. Help | Logout

Main Menu > Search Assignments

Review Assignment Search

This page allows you to search, view and review the proposals that were assigned to you or your organization.

Review Liaisons: You can delegate a proposal to a staff person to review by selecting "Change Reviewer" under the column labeled "Change?". If you are a Review Liaison and choose not to delegate the review, you can review the proposal yourself by following the instructions for Reviewers below.

Reviewers: If you are a Reviewer, you will see all proposals assigned to you in the dropdown list below. To perform a review of a proposal, first select the Proposal Title you wish to review from dropdown menu. This will take you to a new screen where you should select the "Reviews" tab to begin filling out the review sheet.

Search Review Assignments

Request for Proposal:	All RFPs
Proposal Phase:	California River Parkway Grant Program 2018
Organization:	California Urban Rivers Grant Program - June 2016
Sort By:	CDFW - 2017 Cannabis Restoration PSN
	CDFW - 2017 Prop 1 Watershed Restoration & Delta Water Quality and Ecosystem Restoration
	Central Valley Project Improvement Act Grant Program 2016
	Cultural, Community and Natural Resources Grant Program
	Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program 2016/17 Grant Cycle
	Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program 2018 Grant Cycle
	Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program 2019 Grant Cycle
	Green Infrastructure Grant Program - May 2019
	Habitat Conservation Fund
	Museum Grant Program - May 2017
	Once-Through Cooling Interim Mitigation Program_Restoration_2018
	OPC Proposition 1 Grant Program - Round 2
	OPC Proposition 1 Grant Program - Round 3
	pm
	Seed Data Test RFP
	TEST Public Access Grant Program 2019
	test RFP
	Third testing RFP
	Urban Greening Grant Program - January 2018 - Round 2
	Urban Greening Grant Program - January 2019 - Round 3
	Urban Greening Grant Program - March 2017

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Projects are organized according to a grant specific program.

Figure 11

Application | Attachments | **Review Sheet** | Reviewer Notes | Review Status

Download to Excel Text file that can be opened in Excel.

Click on **APPLICATION Q/A** to view all Application Questions and Answers.

Answer all the Questions.

REVIEW SHEET

1 STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS & PROJECT NEED (up to 35 points)
Evaluate how well the project:

- Fulfills the purpose of the chosen project category;
- Accomplishes the statutory objective(s) selected in General Requirement 1;
- Addresses a critical need, e.g. statewide, community, etc.;
- Provides multiple public benefits (These may include, but are not limited to, those defined in General Requirements 2, 3, and 4.)

Scoring Guide*
30-35: Project achieves category and statutory objectives, results in strong multiple benefits, and demonstrates critical need.
20-30: Project achieves category and statutory objectives, but weaker in addressing critical need and/or multiple benefits.
10-20: Project eligible, but weak in achieving category and statutory goals, providing multiple benefits, and demonstrating need.
0-10: Project eligible, but weak in achieving category and statutory goals, provides negligible public benefits, and does not demonstrate need.

*Point ranges are suggested only as a general guide.

Answer:

Please do not use comma (,) and enter a number between 0.000 and 35.000

Answer:

Maximum of 4000 characters.

Once you click on an assigned project, a series of tabs at the top organizes projects by application, attachments, review sheet and notes. The review sheet shown here summarizes statutory requirements, or program priorities and provides a scoring guide.

4.2 SIGNATURE PAGE

Figure 12 provides an overview of the signature, or application cover page and includes at a minimum the following: Applicant information, amount requested, contact information, project description and location, certification statement signed by person authorized in the resolution to accept grant funds or his/her designee (highlighted).

Figure 12

Application Overview

RFP Title: Green Infrastructure Grant Program - May 2019
 Submitting Organization: Sierra Foothill Conservancy
 Submitting Organization Division:
 Project Title: The Mariposa Creek Parkway Acquisition Project
 Project Description: The Mariposa Creek Parkway Acquisition Project (Project) serves to double the length of the existing Parkway and create 160 acres of new community green spaces and recreation opportunities. The Project serves to improve Mariposa's rural recreation-based economy while also improving our community's ability to adapt to impacts of climate change. The Parkway segments provide a walk-able, non-motorized transportation corridor, that ties together numerous resident and visitor destinations within the town of Mariposa. Providing the community of Mariposa with this non-motorized trail through town, that provides safe routes of travel between residences, workplaces, commercial centers and schools, will help people reach needed services and amenities, capitalize on economical forms of transportation, increase opportunity for improved physical and psychological health as well as increased equitable access to open space, green space and recreation, while promoting community resilience.

APPLICANT DETAILS

Applicant Organization: Sierra Foothill Conservancy
 Applicant Organization Division:
 Applicant Address: P.O. Box 691, Mariposa, CA - 95338

PROJECT LOCATION

Latitude: 37.486750000 Longitude: -119.969720000
 County:
 Estimated Date of Completion: 12/31/2020
 Project Address (or nearest cross street): 5065 Jessie St
 Nearest City/Town: Mariposa
 Coordinates Represent: Center of Hubert Property
 Coordinates Determined Using: Obtain lat long button above

PROJECT BUDGET

Funds Requested(\$): 760,900.00
 Other Sources of Funds(\$): 319,900.00
 Total Budget(\$): 1,080,800.00

Funding Program							Applied
Proposition 68							Yes
Project Management Role	Title	First Name	Last Name	Phone	Fax	Email	
Project Director: Authorized Representative	Executive Director	Bridget	Fithian	209-742-5556		bridget@sierrafoothill.org	
Project Manager: Day to day contact	Land Conservation Director	Lauren	Hubert	209-742-5556		lauren@sierrafoothill.org	

Applicant Information

Name: Sierra Foothill Conservancy
 Division:
 Address: P.O. Box 691 Mariposa, CA 95338
 Federal Tax ID: 936301476

Person Submitting Information

Submitter Name: Jessica Thompson
 Submitter Phone: 209-742-5556
 Submitter Fax:
 Submitter Email: jessica.t@sierrafoothill.org

Legislative Information	Primary	Additional District(s)
Senate District	06	06
Assembly District	03	
US Congressional District	04	

Contacts	Name	Phone	Email
Sierra Foothill Conservancy	Jessica Thompson	209-742-5556	jessica.t@sierrafoothill.org

Certification And Submission Statement

Please read before signing and submitting application.

I certify under penalty of perjury:

- The information entered on behalf of Applicant Organization is true and complete to the best of my knowledge;
- I am an employee of or a consultant for the Applicant Organization authorized to submit the application on behalf of the Applicant Organization; and
- I understand that any false, incomplete or incorrect statements may result in the disqualification of this application.

By signing this application, I waive any and all rights to privacy and confidentiality of the proposal on behalf of the applicant, to the extent provided in this RFP.

Submission By: jessica.t@sierrafoothill

Submitter Initials: ct

Submission Date: 7/1/2019 7:48:55 AM

The signature page of the completed Project Proposal Form should be **signed by the same Authorized Representative** identified in the submitted resolution.

4.3 STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF PROJECT

The applicant should briefly discuss the environmental, cultural, or historical context in which the project takes place and identify which problems or issues will be addressed by the project and explains the reason or necessity of the project. This information can be combined with the project description above on the application page if you find it provides a more concise discussion. However, the grantee should explain the steps needed to accomplish the goals and objectives of the project. Depending on the grant funding program, it is generally helpful to identify or characterize baseline data, current, or on-going restoration activities.

Key Questions to Address in the Statement

- What are the major scope elements and approximate timeline for implementation?
- What are the initial and long-term management or maintenance plans for the project site?
- What entity will perform the long-term maintenance and is there an agreement in place?
- What are the key success criteria for the project's long-term goals (i.e. what metrics tells us that the project is successful)?
- What are the public access points, if applicable?

BMP's:

- 1. Identify major scope elements, timeline, project objectives and how the project will address problems or issues identified in the proposal.**
- 2. Characterize baseline data and current activities.**
- 3. What are the project success criteria.**

4.4 COST ESTIMATE (click on [Figure 1.3](#) below to open)

A critical piece of the grant agreement is the project budget. Regarding indirect costs such as project management, planning, permitting, etc., if the proposal includes contributing funds from the grantee, or has a match requirement per the program, whenever possible consider structuring the budget so that contributing funds are used to first pay for indirect costs. Although staff time is an eligible, reimbursable expense, it requires considerable back up documentation per Department of Finance standards, including proof of salary, proof the activity was performed (e.g. timesheets), proof of payment to the employee and certification from the CFO or designee. However, this isn't always possible as sometimes the grant is the major funding source, or perhaps the only funding source.

The quantity of supporting documentation required can be a significant burden to the grantee to assemble, especially a small non-profit and increases the chance for errors and omissions, which can result in delays to invoice processing. For example, most municipalities include an

administrative cost allocation added to an employee salary, sometimes referred to as a 'billable rate' when billing for employee time. This is an amount added to a base salary to cover the grantee's administrative costs. However, the additional administrative costs are ineligible under many grant programs and must be adjusted out by the grantee prior to invoicing. In addition, the time spent by the grantee assembling and proofing supporting docs is also eligible for reimbursement.

Direct costs by contrast require less supporting documentation than indirect costs. When a sub-contractor invoices the grantee, the grantee need only demonstrate proof the sub-contractor's invoice was paid and include a copy of the invoice. It is an easier standard to comply with and generally results in fewer documents, less processing time required by the grant administrator to proof all documents and more timely reimbursement of the grantee.

A final comment regarding budgets. While detail in the budget is good, it is possible to get too much of a good thing. It is common during the construction period for grantees to request reprogramming of funds from one task to another as actual time and material costs become clearer. For example, many wildland restoration projects include excavation, rough grading, fine grading and spreading of excavated material on-site. However, the time necessary to complete individual tasks is an estimate and it's unclear until the project is moving forward whether less, or more rough grading versus fine grading is needed. A budget item that exceeds 10% of an original estimate for a particular task may require an amendment to the grant. Consequently, work with the grantee to align the budget with the key elements of the project and higher-level tasks ([Figure 13](#)), but also bundle closely related activities into a single line item to allow for more flexibility in reprogramming of funds. This helps budget items to flex within that 10% range without having to process an amendment every time there is a need to reprogram funds between tasks over the course of implementation. For example, highlighted in Figure 13, excavation, grading and spreading cut material is consolidated. Also highlighted are the revegetation, irrigation and seeding of the habitat zones. These could potentially be consolidated.

In addition, although the grantee has a budget format as provided in the original application, create a budget template to provide to grantees for uniformity and consistency. Coordinate with the grantee to complete the cost estimate with an appropriate level of detail but organize the budget by its main components.

Examples of Project Components Defined in Cost Estimates

- Non-construction (design, permitting, project management, CEQA)
- Site preparation/clearing
- Grading
- Erosion control
- Irrigation
- Revegetation
- Amenities
- Contingency

Figure 13

CONSERVATION LAND TRUST - COST ESTIMATE			
California River Parkways Grant Program California Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Act of 2002			
American River Parkway, Cordova Creek Naturalization			
Project Element	Total Project Cost	River Parkways Grant	City of Rancho Cordova (cash)
1: Baseline Studies & Design to Date			
Soils Data Collection (Water Forum cash)	\$20,581	\$0	\$20,581
Design Concepts (Parks cash)	\$10,000	\$0	\$10,000
City of Rancho Cordova Staff (City in-kind)	\$1,459	\$0	\$1,459
County Staff (Parks in-kind)	\$6,624	\$0	\$6,624
Subtotal Task 1	\$38,664	\$0	\$38,664
1. Project Management			
Finalize Channel Design			
Design Mgmt & Coord	\$24,359	\$0	\$24,359
Geomorphic Assessment	\$23,450	\$0	\$23,450
Data Collection (soil investigation)	\$19,888	\$0	\$19,888
Topographic Surveys	\$17,990	\$0	\$17,990
Hydraulic Modeling	\$22,000	\$0	\$22,000
Design Feasibility Assessment	\$37,600	\$0	\$37,600
Design Memorandum	\$27,769	\$0	\$27,769
Construction Documents (Dept. Water Resources)	\$73,754	\$0	\$73,754
City Design review & input (City in-kind)	\$14,296	\$0	\$14,296
Public Meeting and Collaboration	\$4,475	\$0	\$4,475
Plan Review & Comment (CNPS In-kind)	\$1,289	\$0	\$1,289
Habitat Design, Documents, Support	\$53,035	\$0	\$53,035
Permitting & CEQA			
CEQA	\$65,879	\$65,879	\$0
CDFG 1602 Notification and Fees	\$8,300	\$8,300	\$0
Corps 404 & Sections 7 & 106	\$26,200	\$26,200	\$0
Central Valley RWQCB 401 Certification	\$6,500	\$6,500	\$0
Reclamation Board Encroachment, SLC	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$0
Subtotal Task 1	\$429,284	\$109,379	\$319,905
2. Stream Construction			
Channel Mass Grade (assumes cut material disposed on site in balanced cut/fill)			
Cut material disposal (if necessary)	\$408,520	\$408,520	\$0
Construction Survey and Staking	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$0
Channel Biotechnical Bank Stabilization	\$29,000	\$29,000	\$0
Energy Dissipator (Upstream)	\$70,000	\$70,000	\$0
Vegetated Grade Control (Downstream)	\$11,400	\$11,400	\$0
Additional grade structure (not on site plan)	\$25,720	\$25,720	\$0
Implement SWPPP	\$29,305	\$29,305	\$0
Technical Oversight (DWR)	\$60,000	\$60,000	\$0
Construction Inspection & Material Testing (County Construction Management Inspection Division-CMID)	\$21,130	\$21,130	\$0
Physical Inspection (Consultant)	\$74,700	\$74,700	\$0
Low Crossings (Parks cash)	\$8,600	\$8,600	\$0
	\$4,400	\$4,400	\$0
Subtotal Task 2	\$752,775	\$752,775	\$0
3. Trail			
Excavation	\$3,684	\$3,684	\$0.00
Construction	\$66,240	\$66,240	\$0.00
Subtotal Task 3	\$69,924	\$69,924	\$0.00
4. Signs and Interpretive Aids			
Grant Acknowledgement Sign (installed)	\$985	\$0	\$985
Restoration in progress signs (temp)	\$200	\$0	\$200
Develop, layout interp. signs (Parks in-kind)	\$1,342	\$0	\$1,342
Interp. Panels 3 ea. Pedestal, 2 ea. Kiosk	\$2,750	\$0	\$2,750
Kiosk, Installed	\$7,500	\$0	\$7,500
Interpretive Sign Pedestals, installed	\$2,400	\$0	\$2,400
Subtotal Task 4	\$15,177	\$0	\$15,177
5. Habitat Construction & Establishment			
Identifying & locating plants (CNPS in-kind)	\$1,790	\$0	\$1,790
Native Plants (CNPS in-kind)	\$9,000	\$0	\$9,000
Plant collection, selection (Parks in-kind)	\$3,580	\$0	\$3,580
CMID services during habitat construction	\$19,000	\$19,000	\$0
Support during habitat construction	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$0
Biological inspections	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$0
Contract Habitat Construction - Seasonal Wetlands			
Excavation & spoils placement	\$121,875	\$121,875	\$0
Fine grading	\$1,250	\$1,250	\$0
Water control structures/weirs	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$0
Seeding	\$17,500	\$17,500	\$0
Planting (excludes 2 acres by Soil Born)	\$64,200	\$64,200	\$0
Establishment & monitoring through 4/30/13	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$0
Subtotal Task 5	\$289,195	\$274,825	\$14,370
6. Riparian Habitat			
Fine grading	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$0
Seeding	\$14,000	\$14,000	\$0
Planting (excludes 1 acre by Soil Born)	\$13,718	\$13,718	\$0
Irrigation Installation	\$17,000	\$17,000	\$0
Establishment & monitoring through 4/30/13	\$70,300	\$70,300	\$0
Upland Habitat Enhancement			
Fine grading	\$940	\$940	\$0
Seeding	\$11,250	\$11,250	\$0
Planting (excludes 1 acre by Soil Born)	\$7,635	\$7,635	\$0
Irrigation Installation	\$14,720	\$14,720	\$0
Establishment & monitoring through 4/30/13	\$42,455	\$42,455	\$0
Grassland Enhancement			
Seeding	\$6,750	\$6,750	\$0
Establishment & monitoring through 4/30/13	\$13,500	\$13,500	\$0
Supervision & Monitoring (Parks in-kind)	\$9,949	\$0	\$9,949
Establishment (Parks in-kind after 4-30-13)	\$36,000	\$0	\$36,000
Subtotal Task 6	\$258,217	\$213,268	\$44,949
8. Contingency			
	\$129,456	\$129,456	\$0
Subtotal Task 8	\$129,456	\$129,456	\$0
Grand Totals	\$1,944,028	\$1,549,627	\$394,401

Project management costs to be reimbursed incrementally in conjunction with payment requests for completed benchmarks/deliverables. Direct project related costs with detailed time information required for in-house services.

When working with your Grantee to develop a project final budget, The Department of Finance provides the following guidance.

- All project elements should be detailed and customized to fit the project. Each element should be clearly described in the project narrative.
- Each funding source should have its own column. Other Funding Source column headings should specify cash or in-kind.
- The Grant and Other Funding Source columns should sum to the Total Cost column.
- Cost splitting of project elements between grant funds and other funding sources should be avoided whenever possible. Cost splitting makes it nearly impossible to determine what the grant paid for and what the other funding source paid for. In addition, as a practice don't leave cells blank to indicate zero dollars. Instead, insert a zero in the cell.
- Overhead or In-service payroll may include a "billable rate" also known as an administrative cost allocation and may not be eligible for reimbursement.

BMP's:

1. Avoid splitting line item costs between funding sources.
2. Use other funding sources to cover indirect costs when possible.
3. Use other funding sources to cover non-construction costs when possible.
4. Finalize scope of work, align budget with major project elements and avoid excessive task detail.
5. Create a budget template that can be used to develop draft final budgets (see [figure 9.](#)) and ensure the budget is consistent with the scope of work.
6. Setup a quarterly report schedule during implementation.
7. Update contact information as necessary including day to day and as authorized in the resolution.

4.5 DRAFT RESOLUTION TO ACCEPT GRANT FUNDS (click on [Figure 14](#) below to open)

Although the practice of obtaining a signed authorizing resolution to receive grant funds from a governing body, or board does not appear to be uniform across state agencies, it is a good idea to obtain at a minimum a draft resolution at the time of application submittal. The purpose of the resolution is to ensure that someone from the organization is not acting independently and without knowledge and support of the organization or entity. However, a certification letter is acceptable for organizations without a governing board. Board meeting schedules may prohibit an applicant from obtaining a signed resolution at the time of application however, the applicant should indicate when the Board will next meet to adopt. The resolution should include assurances as indicated in [Figure 14](#) and adopted prior to recommendation of funding.

Figure 14

RESOLUTION TEMPLATE

Resolution No: _____
RESOLUTION (GOVERNING BODY OF GRANTEE)
APPROVING THE APPLICATION FOR GRANT FUNDS FOR THE
ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT AND MITIGATION (EEM) PROGRAM

WHEREAS, the Legislature and Governor of the State of California have enacted Section 164.56 of the California Streets And Highways Code, which is intended to provide grant funds to local, state and federal agencies and nonprofit entities for projects to enhance and mitigate the environmental impacts of modified or new public transportation facilities; and

WHEREAS, the California Natural Resources Agency has been delegated the responsibility for the administration of this grant program, establishing necessary procedures and criteria, and is required to submit to the California Transportation Commission a list of recommended projects from which the grant recipients will be selected; and

WHEREAS, said procedures established by the California Natural Resources Agency require a resolution certifying the approval of application(s) by the Applicant's governing board before submission of said application(s) to the State; and

WHEREAS, the Applicant, if selected, will enter into an agreement with the State of California to carry out the project.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the _____ (Governing Body)

1. Approves the filing of an application for the (name of the project); and
2. Certifies that Applicant understands the assurances and certification in the application; and
3. Certifies that Applicant or title holder will have sufficient funds to operate and maintain the project(s) consistent with the land tenure requirements; or will secure the resources to do so; and
4. Certifies that it will comply with all provisions of Section 1771.5 of the California Labor Code; and
5. If applicable, certifies that the project will comply with any laws and regulations including, but not limited to, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), legal requirements for building codes, health and safety codes, and disabled access laws, and that prior to commencement of construction all applicable permits will have been obtained; and
6. Certifies that Applicant will work towards the State Planning Priorities intended to promote equity, strengthen the economy, protect the environment, and promote public health and safety as included in Government Code Section 65041.1; and
7. Appoints the (designate position, not person occupying position) _____ or designee, as agent to conduct all negotiations, execute and submit all documents including, but not limited to, applications, agreements, payment requests and so on, which may be necessary for the completion of the aforementioned project(s).

Approved and adopted the ___ day of _____, 20___, I, the undersigned, hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution Number _____ was duly adopted by the _____ (Governing Body)

Following Roll Call Vote: Ayes: _____
Nos : _____
Absent: _____

Clerk/Secretary for the Governing Board

BMP's:

1. Obtain a signed authorizing resolution to accept grant funds (draft okay for application purposes, with schedule of when the Board will next meet to adopt.
2. Prior to any recommendation for funding an adopted copy of the resolution is required.
3. The person authorized in the resolution, or his/her designee should match the person who signs the application or their designee.

4.6 IMAGES/MAPS

In addition to a location map and assessor's parcel map of the project site, it is strongly suggested the application include photographs of different views of the proposed site reflecting current conditions, including flooding issues, invasive species, soil erosion and the locations of restoration or construction activities. It is recommended that photos are taken from consistent photo-stations or monitoring points to document before and after conditions.

BMP's:

- 1. Applications should clearly indicate location of the project along with assessor's parcel maps. The assessor parcel numbers should be consistent with those listed in the CEQA document.**
- 2. Applications should include photographs of the project site documenting current conditions and the issues the project will address. These same vantage points should be consistent with post project monitoring.**

4.7 SITE PLAN (Development project only. Click on [Figure 15](#) to open)

Site plans should contain 1) details of the property, 2) indicate the names and location of rivers, creeks or streams that abut or cross the property, 3) other natural/geologic features, 4) existing buildings and/or impediments (wells, storm drains, utilities, etc.), 5) exterior boundaries, public access points and proposed signage locations (bond acknowledgement signage and any other interpretive signage, [\(Figure 15\)](#)). The site plan should include details regarding the location of the improvements described in the grant proposal and be specific enough to allow someone unfamiliar with the project to visualize it in detail. However, the site plan does not need to be a professional drawing to convey crucial information.

In addition, if a project objective is streambank stabilization, or creek restoration it is helpful to include the following materials if they are available.

- Summary of a concept restoration plan that includes a cross-section, plan-view and longitudinal profile of the proposed restoration project.
- A list of plants that currently inhabit the site (dominant overstory and understory species) and an appropriate local native plant species list proposed for implementation.
- Any additional drawings, photos, etc. that will help evaluate the benefits of the project.

Figure 15



BMP's:

- 1. Site plans should convey critical features of the project including proposed improvements, or restoration areas. They can also provide context to the surrounding area such as land use, existing infrastructure and access.**
- 2. There is no 'one size fits all' standard or format for site plans. The important point is it communicates property details, proposed improvements and amenities.**

4.8 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

State funding programs review all California Environmental Quality Act documentation provided by the lead agency and file as a responsible agency prior to construction once the project is approved (receives notice to proceed) and CEQA is complete. This is leaning a bit into the grant administration phase which comes later and covered in greater detail in the CNRA Policy and Procedure manual, but it's an important topic and worth noting here. At this point in the application process what is essential is that the grantee provide a status of all environmental documents, including NEPA if applicable. Grantees are responsible for complying with all applicable laws and regulations including CEQA.

Program should take care when reviewing CEQA documentation provided by the lead agency. Does the description include all project elements in the application? Is the location, and/or assessor parcel numbers consistent with the application? If not, it may not be one project and may need to be vetted further. In many cases environmental review has not been completed beyond an initial study at the time of application submittal. Many grant programs have provisions that allow lead agencies to conduct environmental review as a reimbursable expense. A compliance summary tells us where an applicant is in the process, and what the appropriate CEQA finding is based on the initial study, or checklist. Often a draft Notice of Exemption is included with the application, or initial study.

In addition, it is a good practice to review internal policies regarding CEQA and consider the following during the administrative or technical review as part of the application process. An environmental [compliance summary](#) is included here for convenience and to assist with your application process.

Things to Consider When Conducting an Environmental Review

- Were there required mitigation measures? If yes, were they completed? If yes and not completed, seek an explanation.
- If CEQA is more than five years old, seek a supplemental indicating nothing has changed that would impact the original findings.
- If a specific project is contemplated as part of a comprehensive CEQA document covering a large planning area, then the specific project may need to be referenced as part of that plan, sometimes referred to as 'tiering'.
- File an Exemption or Notice of Determination as a *responsible agency*, as applicable before construction funds are released. A thirty-five (35) day statute of limitations will be initiated with the filing. Once the thirty-five (35) days pass, funds can then be released. Important for grantees to file an NOE as soon as possible.
- While Notice of Exemptions are not required to be filed according to CEQA guidelines, our programs generally require an NOE be filed anyway. The state generally adheres to this policy since it supports transparency and because it shortens the period for a public challenge from six (6) months to thirty-five (35) days, potentially expediting project implementation.

BMP's:

- 1. Status of environmental review. Review environmental documents for consistency with proposed application, location of project, apn's and scope.**
- 2. CEQA must be complete prior to beginning operations and a copy of environmental document forwarded to the granting agency.**
- 3. Review internal policies regarding CEQA for compliance.**
- 4. One project, one CEQA document. Multiple sites treated as one project may in fact be multiple projects.**

5. GRANT ADMINISTRATION

It is recommended at some point that Offices develop a policy and procedure manual to guide their administrative workflow. Where policies set the expectation for employees, the procedures outline the steps for it. This ensures consistency in day-to-day workflow and helps in maintaining quality output. This is especially true for new grant administrators. An effective policies and procedures manual simplifies training and is an important project management tool.

In a telework setting a [policy and procedure manual](#) is a good way to keep employees on the same page as these manuals work like references in case someone is confused about taking a step or decision-making and enables everyone to operate according to a department standard.

If your department currently has one, then you already know the benefits of having one. For program staff who are interested in developing a policy and procedures manual, the MSU has published CNRA's Bonds & Grants policy and procedures manual to our website and below as an example. We want to emphasize that the current procedures manual is in the process of being updated. However, it can still be very helpful as a framework in developing your own procedures manual.

6. LOOKING AHEAD/ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Reading from the Department of Finance's Bond Accountability (BA) guide, "a department's documentation of its project and grantee monitoring efforts helps demonstrate program compliance and good grant stewardship." Beginning with Proposition 84 and going forward compliance, or performance monitoring is expected for bond funded projects. Grant projects typically have tenure requirements of 3, 10, 20, or 25 years in the case of capital improvement projects and in perpetuity for acquisitions. A monitoring plan is therefore an essential component in the application for grant funds. Some Offices have made the monitoring plan part of the competitive grant process and have developed screening criteria to evaluate the plan.

Monitoring objectives will obviously vary according to the funding program, so it is incumbent upon the granting Office to develop a clear protocol about what, how and when to monitor for the period during project implementation and post implementation. Monitoring plans are specific about when reporting is due. Presently, granting Offices can keep track of projects using productivity tools like Microsoft Access and/or Excel. Projects can be placed on a "diary" in Access, so that a simple query can notify the granting Office which monitoring reports are due. The query can also be automated so a reminder, or "tickle file" is generated upon login. Frequency of reporting can depend on the program, or perhaps the project, but quarterly reports during implementation and annual reports post implementation is a common standard observed across Offices.

One possible recommendation is that an email notification is submitted to the grantee as a reminder that a report is expected. In addition, the monitoring process can be incentivized by making it part of a Grantee's performance record. Clear communication with Grantee's about what is expected from them and how well they are doing can help to ensure compliance with monitoring and reporting. Those Grantee's with good performance history may have a competitive advantage over those with a poor history when considering future funding opportunities, which brings us to an

important question. What tells us whether a project is successful? What metrics might we consider for measuring success of a habitat restoration project for example?

In a series of five (5) overall workshops held in 2020-2021, two workshops focused on aquatic and terrestrial habitats. Workshop participants from a cross section of state natural resource agencies broke out into small working groups to discuss ideas about potential metrics for grant programs. There are too many to list them all here, but looking ahead, some potential metrics that we may want to consider in one expression, or another include:

- Native biodiversity enhanced
- Invasive/exotic species managed
- Species/habitat declines prevented
- Ecosystem condition improved
- Ecosystem linked to wider ecological matrix
- Community participation
- Monitoring and research in place
- Other projects are inspired
- Financial support gained

Metrics should be established for a given program such that all projects funded by it are monitoring for the same benchmarks using consistent methodology. The Bond Accountability guide provides a simplified reporting format ([Figure 16](#)) that could serve as a helpful starting point however it is somewhat dated and may not be well suited for many programs, particularly if we want to evaluate the success of a project or program following the types of metrics suggested by our breakout participants, but it does provide a minimum standard for reporting and audit purposes. It is ultimately up to the administering Office to establish the appropriate metrics that uphold the purpose and objectives of the grant program, and the method for reporting the data.

The Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) is in the process of developing a purpose-built database, the Resource Agency Project Tracking and Reporting system (RAPTR) to store project and grant program data accessible to the various Offices. One of the main objectives of RAPTR is to store and share data collected at a project, or geographical unit level for monitoring and research purposes. There is also the potential for RAPTR to facilitate strategic planning between Offices and provide more opportunities to coordinate and leverage resources in areas of statewide priority. The data can also provide us the record of investments over time, their distribution and potentially provide evidence of where additional resources are needed.

Another goal is accountability and self-assessment; to be able to demonstrate to California voters, using the data collected from the programs, that bond funds are generating widely distributed and significant environmental and public benefits across California communities, promoting public trust and transparency that public funds are being invested wisely and effectively.

Currently, long term monitoring (e.g. beyond three-years) is not an eligible cost for bond funds and has largely been the responsibility of the grantee to provide the resources necessary to conduct site assessments, provide photo-documentation and produce an annual report. Monitoring costs are not capital related costs since they are post project completion. Consequently, if monitoring is required beyond three-years per the grant agreement it is unclear how it is being conducted or funded or where the data collected ultimately goes. However, capital improvement projects can have a

stewardship obligation that can last 10, 20, 25 years depending on the amount of the grant award, and there is an expectation that projects continue to provide environmental and public benefits during the stewardship tenure. Project files are closed, final payment is issued, but whether these projects are maintained by the grantee per the grant agreement is often unclear, and difficult to verify or enforce. If a report is submitted by the grantee during the tenure period, it is not clear where it goes, or who reads it. It is our hope that as we advance a monitoring framework beyond the existing informal system, we are able to fully resource monitoring activities and ultimately safeguard state investments.

APPENDIX S

Annual Monitoring Report Template

Recipient Name:	Report #:
Agreement Number:	Date Report Submitted:
Project Name:	Reporting Period:
Monitoring Performed By: (Name and Title)	Date Monitoring Performed:

1. Describe the method of monitoring:
2. What is the current condition of the project? For acquisitions, what is the current land use and condition of the property?
3. Were any questionable uses or potential violations of the project or property identified? If yes, what corrective actions are being taken?
4. Has there been a transfer of interest in the property during the past year? (circle one):
 Yes No
 If yes, please identify the type of transfer and name/address of new interest holder:
5. List any relevant attachments to this report, including photographs, news articles, fliers, etc. Also, provide any additional comments:

I certify that this Annual Monitoring Report is accurate and that this project is in compliance with the agreement.

Authorized Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____ Title: _____

Note: This template was obtained from the California Department of Conservation's California Farmland Conservancy Program available at: <http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/cfcp/grant/Pages/index.aspx>

California Natural Resources Agency Conservation Easement Survey

Grant Number: _____
Grantee Name: _____
Project Title: _____
Grant Program: _____
Project Closeout Date: _____

1. Describe the current status of the property over which a conservation easement was acquired with grant funds and how its current use meets the objectives described in the application and the requirements of the grant program.

2. As applicable, has the property been developed as proposed in the grant application, if not what is the status of this development?

3. Who provides Operations and Maintenance for the project? Are there any changes to ownership or contact information?

4. Indicate how/when the public has access to this project (as applicable).

5. Provide photos (no more than two).

Submitted by: _____
(Name/Title Printed) Signature Date

Updated Contact information

Phone number: _____

Email: _____