California Department of Water Resources (DWR)
Coastal Watershed Flood Risk Reduction Grant Program

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

This document includes questions that have been asked at the workshops, in phone conversations and by email during the development of the Coastal Watershed Flood Risk Reduction Grant Program Final Guidelines and Proposal Solicitation (June 2020) (Guidelines) and the proposal solicitation period. The intent is to share responses to those questions with all potential applicants for consistency and transparency. If a response herein contradicts what is stated in the Guidelines, the Guidelines shall prevail. Multiple references are made to appendices of the Guidelines which are available on the program website https://water.ca.gov/Work-With-Us/Grants-And-Loans/Coastal-Watershed-Flood-Risk-Reduction. All funding decisions are made by DWR. Draft funding recommendations will be made available for public comment for at least 15 days at the end of the full application reviews. If you have questions or concerns about the content of this FAQ or the application process, please contact us at Coastal@water.ca.gov. This list may be updated periodically as new questions arise.

**UPDATED: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) - September 29, 2020 (marked with asterisks **)
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) - 1st Publication September 4, 2020

Administrative FAQ:

1. **Is there a template for the full proposal?**
    a. No, there is no template for a full proposal; the proposal is free form. Be sure to read the proposal review process and basic information required in the Guidelines Appendix B, the Scoring Criteria in Appendix C, and how to calculate your local cost share in Appendix D. Be sure to incorporate project basics like scope, schedule, and budget as those will be carried into a funding agreement if selected for funding (see the funding agreement template provided in Appendix H). Be sure to complete and submit forms provided in Appendices E, F, and G.
    b. While you develop your proposal, pay close attention to the scoring criteria (Appendix C) to put your proposal in the best competitive position for funding.
2. **Are hard copies of our grant application acceptable to submit?**
    a. Yes, however with most staff working from home due to COVID-19 circumstances, the office doors may be locked. Please coordinate directly with our program staff to ensure the hard copy package is scheduled for delivery when one of the program staff will be there to receive the package. Without this coordination, your package is likely to be delayed and/or returned, jeopardizing its receipt by the deadline. Please also include an electronic copy of the proposal.
3. **What attached documentation do I need to provide for the Attorney's Certification Form?**
    a. Attachments are not required to the Attorney's Certification Form; the Attorney's Certification form only asks for citations to the appropriate code sections. However, you are free to submit documentation if you feel it is necessary to answer the questions.

4. **Adopting a resolution will take time because our board meets infrequently, do we have to submit it with the application?**
   a. The resolution may be submitted after award but must be received before the execution of the funding agreement and receipt of any grant funds.
5. **My organization does not have authority to implement the proposed project. What organization with authority should I choose to be co-applicant?**
   a. If your organization intends to acquire, hold, and transfer property for the project, a co-applicant may not be required. However, implementation authority can vary significantly. Some examples of agencies that may be suitable as a co-applicant with jurisdiction include but are not limited to, your local flood control district, water conservation district, county, city, or tribal government. Please contact us if you have further questions about jurisdictional authority for implementation.
6. **Our project is not yet designed, and we do not know what land is needed for project implementation. How can we still submit a proposal that would be eligible for funding?**
   a. If design remains to be completed, and you can come up with ideas on how to address the needed land acquisition we will consider the application. In the past, we have funded land acquisition for larger projects; the scope of work included a list of parcels to be acquired, and funding awarded would reimburse for any of the parcels on the list as they became available.
7. **My project design has already begun, if I include the design in the scope of work, will it be eligible for reimbursement?**
   a. Costs incurred prior to the notice of funding award are not eligible for reimbursement and are not eligible for consideration as matching funds. However, expenses for the ongoing design that are incurred on or after the date of notice of funding award are grant-eligible expenses.
8. **Our project is not quite ready for construction, does this make it ineligible for funding?**
   a. No, planning and design and environmental documentation that has yet to be completed can be included in the scope along with construction or land acquisition and funded from this program. However, feasibility studies cannot be funded under this program at any stage. Additionally, planning and design, and/or preparation of environmental documentation alone, without any construction or land acquisition component, cannot be funded under this program.
9. **Are "shovel ready" projects (that have design, environmental, and permitting completed) ranked higher than other projects?**
   a. No, there are no additional points awarded for projects that are further along in design, environmental compliance, and permitting. Please refer to Guidelines Appendix C for Grant Evaluation and Scoring.
10. **What might be the information needed by a California state auditor if our project is audited? Is there a general procedure for the grantees to follow?**
    a. Appendix H of the Grant Agreement Template includes a list of documents that State Auditors would need to review in the event a funding agreement is audited. Funding Recipients should ensure that records are maintained for each funded project. Recordkeeping is required for a minimum of 3 years after the final payment of the grant funds.

Funding FAQ:

Website links to download GIS files for DACs may inadvertently be broken, where do I get the GIS files?

      b. Our apologies for the inconvenience, until the links are fixed, you can download data here: https://cadwr.box.com/s/i7w7e4iil09exsspy3xu0y3kr9d3noyw (DAC GIS Data)

      c. Note: SDAC/DAC distinction: this is something a user must set a query for (within their GIS), specifically, using the MHI thresholds shown on the DAC Mapping Tool

      d. Using this tool will be how DWR determines disadvantaged status unless other acceptable justification is provided with the application. Please refer to Appendix D for details.

11. **Are there other funding opportunities in DWR or elsewhere for additional grant funds?**

      a. Below are some links we are aware of; the links below are not exhaustive nor necessarily recommended, but available nonetheless:

      b. California's Grants portal

          i. www.grants.ca.gov

      c. California finance Coordinating Committee

          i. www.cfcc.ca.gov

      d. DWR Grants & Loans

          i. https://water.ca.gov/Work-With-Us/Grants-And-Loans

      e. San Francisco Restoration Authority

          i. http://sfbayrestore.org/restoration-authority-grants

      f. FEMA BRIC

          i. https://www.fema.gov/grants/mitigation/building-resilient-infrastructure-communities

Note that required matching funds for the Coastal Watershed Flood Risk Reduction Program may not come from other State sources. (See Guidelines, Section 6.1.)

12. **Is there a minimum or maximum grant award for this program?**

      a. No, there is neither a minimum nor a maximum, but the program currently only has approximately $24.3 million to award for grants.

13. **What is the life of the funding under this program?**

      a. There are two fund appropriations available for this program, most funds are available through June 2023 and a lesser amount are available through June 2024. The funding agreement shall be written so projects complete work by June 2023, which should be the target of all applicants.

14. **What happens if you get more applications than you have funding for?**

      a. We will consider partial funding applications, or we may cut off funding based on a minimum score. We may contact you to inquire about project scalability if we choose to award partial funding.

15. **Can federal/other funds be used to match state funds?**

   a. Yes, any non-State funds can be used to make up the Local cost share, including federal funds. Please refer to Guidelines Section 6.1, Local Cost Share. Projects that receive local or federal grants may score higher if the minimum "local" cost share is exceeded.

16. **Who decides the local/state cost share?**

   a. In the application, applicants should propose their highest justified state cost share based on the Guidelines criteria. DWR staff will review and confirm the cost shares during the application review and scoring process.

17. **My project has multi-use trails that are beyond the minimum required for mitigation – are they eligible for 100% state funding?**
   a. Yes, open space, recreation and ecosystem enhancement features that are beyond the minimum open space, recreation, or ecosystem features required for project mitigation are fundable at 100% state share up to 10% of the total project cost Beyond this 100% reimbursement amount, the state will cost share in these features at the awarded percentage state share.

18. **How do I calculate the Benefit to Cost Ratio (BCR)?**
   a. The benefit to cost ratio is a tool to help score applications and will not eliminate your project from eligibility if the BCR is less than unity. Please contact us for DWR's BCR template spreadsheet useable for the project if you have not received it with this FAQ. However, feel free to use existing BCR calculations if they exist, or feel free to use other examples such as FEMA's tool here: https://www.fema.gov/grants/guidance-tools/benefit-cost-analysis

19. **What if we apply for a grant and have no other funds to complete the remainder of the project?**
   a. The expenditure of these bond funds is intended to produce benefits. If an applicant cannot assure that their project will be accomplished, it is unlikely to receive a grant award. If DWR awards a grant but the applicant does not complete the larger project, DWR may require the repayment of grant funds disbursed plus interest. Please refer to Guidelines Section 3.4.B, Assurances.

Project Benefits FAQ:

20. **My project is preserving habitat that would be lost without the project, does that count as ecosystem enhancement?**
   a. No, preservation of existing habitat is not considered enhancement for eligibility purposes. Examples of enhancement include, but are not limited to, addition of habitat area, improving quality of existing habitat, improving water quality, or removal of barriers to habitat use by target species. Ecosystem preservation as a secondary benefit is desirable but is only secondary to ecosystem enhancement which is required to be eligible for funding.

21. **What is considered an ecosystem benefit? What does multi-benefit mean under this program?**
   a. A Multi-benefit project is planned, designed, implemented, and maintained with the purpose of providing two or more benefits. The projects produce a benefit by reducing flood risk and produce other benefits, like the required ecosystem benefit or other

optional benefits. Other benefits may include supporting commercial fisheries, providing public recreation and/or educational opportunities, improving water supply reliability, or increasing groundwater recharge. Features considered an ecosystem benefit include but are not limited to improving water quality, protecting or enhancing wildlife habitat, implementing adaptive measures to reduce the impacts of climate change on ecosystems, protecting or restoring coastal watersheds or aquatic, wetland, or migratory bird ecosystems, and removing barriers to fish passage.

22. **The flood risk reduction component of our project was not clearly described in the concept proposal or is minimal in extent, how can we improve it?**
    a. Please define the extent of flood risk reduced by providing things such as with-project and without-project hydraulic models, studies, photographs of past flooding, or other information to help demonstrate the extent and frequency of flooding and how the project would reduce the flood risk. Ideally, descriptions will include existing flood frequency and the storm return interval, along with an area map of the flooding (e.g. modeled or based on flood history) and a description of the economic damages that have or may occur (e.g., damages to buildings, infrastructure, agricultural production, other economic losses, and losses of human life if they have occurred).

23. **The ecosystem enhancement component of our project was not clearly described in the concept proposal or is minimal in extent, how can we improve it?**
    a. To position your project well in the competitive environment, be sure to describe the ecosystem that exists with and without the project. Describe the existing habitat extents and quality and compare that with the proposed project. Relate the ecosystem habitat to listed species if possible and describe the likelihood of usage of the proposed habitat by the target species after project completion.

24. **Is sediment removal from a channel or lagoon a reimbursable expense under this program? Is it considered ecosystem enhancement for eligibility purposes? ****
    a. Sediment removal that is typically required as routine maintenance is not eligible for reimbursement (Guidelines Section 7.1.B, C). Generally deferred maintenance like sediment removal is not considered ecosystem enhancement unless a clear case can be made as to why it is not simply returning a channel to its pre-existing conditions had maintenance been performed. There would need to be significant habitat enhancement. However, major maintenance is an eligible expense (e.g. 70 years of sediment accumulation to restore the 90% loss in channel cross section).

25. **The feedback letter to my Concept Proposal suggested we strengthen our flood risk or ecosystem enhancement component. How can I do that?**
    a. Based on our review of all concept proposals, your proposed benefits appeared smaller in quantity and/or quality compared to other proposals. To put your proposal in the best competitive position for funding, consider increasing the benefits achieved by enlarging the benefit area and/or quality.

26. **My concept proposal included only a phase from a much larger project, how should I present the benefits of the proposed project**
    a. As noted in Guidelines Section 3.4.B, phases of larger projects are eligible for grants, and additional assurances must be provided to demonstrate to DWR that the entire project will be completed realizing the benefits of the smaller part or the project as a whole. Be sure to describe the overall project timing, benefits, and potential obstacles to completion. Relate the overall project to the specific phase being proposed for this grant. The decision to rank the project as a whole or a phase of the project resides with DWR's proposal review team. The draft funding recommendations will be made public and posted for public comment prior to making final funding recommendations.

27. **Does land acquisition by itself qualify for funding under this program?**
    a. Yes, lands and easement acquisitions are eligible for reimbursement under this program even without a construction component. However, assurances will be required for such projects as referenced in Guidelines Section 3.4.B.

28. **The feedback letter to my Concept Proposal suggested my ecosystem enhancement component was insufficient. How can I make it sufficient? ****
    a. If possible, consider adding ecosystem features to your project. This would include, but is not limited to, adding a task to evaluate such features' compatibility with your project, designing the compatible features, and constructing of those feature(s). Use a best estimate of construction cost in your grant application.