



# What You Need to Know to Apply for a Healthy Soils Grant

Applications due Sept. 19, 2017 by 5:00pm PDT

The CDFA's new Healthy Soils Incentives Program will provide up to \$3.75 million in grants to California growers and ranchers for using agricultural management practices that sequester carbon, reduce atmospheric greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and improve soil health. Funding will be offered for practices that have not been used in the past year or that are used on new or expanded acreage.

## What are the practices that qualify for funding?

<p><b>Soil Management</b>  <i>Note: At least one of these practices must be implemented for 3 years, or must already be in use and be maintained</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mulching</li> <li>• No-Till or Reduced Till</li> <li>• Cover Crops</li> <li>• Compost Application (only commercial compost is allowed, at specified rates; soils with organic matter <math>\geq</math> 12% are ineligible)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cropland to Herbaceous Cover</b>  <i>Note: Must be in combination with at least one new or existing soil management practice and implemented for 3 years</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Herbaceous Wind Barrier</li> <li>• Vegetative Barriers</li> <li>• Riparian Herbaceous Cover</li> <li>• Contour Buffer Strips</li> <li>• Field Border</li> <li>• Filter Strips</li> </ul>
<p><b>Establishment of Woody Cover</b>  <i>Note: Must be in combination with at least one new or existing soil management practice and maintained for 10 years</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment</li> <li>• Riparian Forest Buffer</li> <li>• Hedgerow Planting</li> <li>• Silvopasture</li> </ul>

## How big are the grants, and are cost shares or matching funds allowed?

The grants are a maximum of \$50,000 and only one application is allowed per farm. Cost shares or matching funds are allowed in the form of in-kind contributions (e.g., labor costs) and/or funds from other programs (e.g., NRCS EQIP). In fact, applicants are required to use matching funds for costs incurred during the third year (January 1 - December 31, 2020).

## Are project costs paid up front or reimbursed?

Grant recipients may be eligible to receive an advance payment up to 25% of the total grant amount. The remaining funds will be allocated on a reimbursement basis through quarterly or monthly invoicing. CDFA will withhold 10% from the total grant award until they verify project completion.

## What is the timeframe of the projects?

The project duration is three years, starting January 1, 2018 and ending December 31, 2020.

## What does the farmer have to do to demonstrate they will reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

Applicants must submit cropping and management practice history for the past three years for the parcels included in the project. Projects that include compost application must include some soil data.

As part of the application, applicants are required to use one or both of the following tools to estimate GHG reductions for various practices:

1. COMET-Planner (<http://comet-planner.com/>) will be used to estimate GHG reduction from all eligible agricultural management practices other than compost application.
2. Compost-Planner (<http://www.compost-planner.com/>) will be used to estimate GHG reduction from compost application.

### **What verification and reporting will be required?**

Applicants will be required to verify to CDFA or a third-party verifier who conducts field evaluations no later than March 31, 2020 that they completed the terms of the grant agreement. Farmers will have to do soil tests and report soil organic matter or soil carbon data to CDFA upon receipt of the award and at the end of each year of the three-year project period. In addition, CDFA will contact a subset of awarded projects for three years after project completion to collect data such as practice implementation and GHG reduction estimates. CDFA will cover the cost of verification.

### **How are the projects evaluated?**

The GHG benefits of the projects will be evaluated on a per acre basis, so small farms have just as good a chance at getting funded as large ones. Projects that use more than one eligible practice will increase the GHG reductions per acre and should therefore be more competitive. Applications will be scored on the following criteria: Project feasibility; Project sustainability; GHG reductions benefits; Soil health and environmental co-benefits; Inclusion of a conservation plan; Location in disadvantaged communities. A conservation plan (e.g., from NRCS, a certified crop advisor, etc.) is not required, but additional points will be awarded if included. Additional points will also be given to those projects that maximize benefits to disadvantaged communities (as defined in the Request for Grant Applications). The program gives additional consideration to the geographic location (in an attempt to distribute the funds throughout the state), and to projects that have matching funds in all three years.

### **How do farmers apply?**

Applicants will use an online tool called the Financial Assistance Application Submittal Tool (FAAST). FAAST can be accessed at <http://faast.waterboards.ca.gov/>

Within the online FAAST application, the following attachments will be required (instructions and templates are provided in the Request for Applications):

1. GHG reduction estimation report using COMET-Planner and/or Compost Planner
2. Schematics of the project design
3. Work Plan
4. Budget Worksheet
5. Year 3 Cost Sharing Summary

### **What are demonstration projects?**

CDFA is offering up to \$3 million for demonstration projects that showcase conservation management practices that reduce GHGs, increase soil health and promote widespread adoption of conservation management practices throughout the state. Grants of up to \$100,000 will be awarded for projects that implement eligible agricultural management practices and conduct outreach. Grants of up to \$250,000 will be awarded for projects that also measure and collect data on GHG emissions and carbon sequestration. Not-for-profits, UC Cooperative Extensions, Federal and University Experiment Stations, Resource Conservation Districts, tribal governments, and farmers and ranchers in partnership with any of these entities are eligible to apply. More details are available at the CDFA Healthy Soils Program website below.

#### **For More Information**

See here for more information about the Healthy Soils program, and for a schedule of Grant Application Workshops: <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oefi/healthysoils/>.

Applicants may find additional resources for support through their local Resource Conservation District or Cooperative Extension office, or with sustainable agriculture non-profit organizations.