

Request for Applications Fiscal Year 2024 Agricultural Water Conservation Grants

The Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) requests applications for Fiscal Year 2024 Agricultural Water Conservation Grants. The TWDB plans to award up to \$1.5 million in grants from the Agricultural Water Conservation Fund. The rules governing the Agricultural Water Conservation Program may be found in 31 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Chapter 367.

Summary of the Request for Applications

Solicitation Date (Opening): date published in the *Texas Register*

Due Date (Closing): 2:00 p.m., Wednesday, April 3, 2024

Anticipated Award Date: July 2024

Estimated Total Funding: up to \$1,500,000

Eligible Grant Amount: up to \$1,500,000; local match is encouraged

Eligible applicants: state agencies and political subdivisions (as defined by 31 TAC § 367.2)

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Agricultural Water Conservation Grants

Agricultural water conservation projects that may be eligible to apply include but are not limited to: irrigation monitoring equipment and software, irrigation scheduling practices, irrigation conveyance efficiency improvements, rainwater harvesting for agricultural irrigation, precipitation enhancement for agriculture, managed aquifer recharge for agricultural irrigation, demonstrations and technology transfer, and regenerative agricultural practices.

Projects awarded funding must further water conservation in the state and support the implementation of water conservation and water management strategies in the state water plan (Texas Water Code §§ 17.900–17.902; 31 Texas Administrative Code § 367.5). To receive consideration, projects must meet the eligibility criteria and achieve the following goals:

- (A) Improve agricultural irrigation efficiency through irrigation system improvements
- (B) Enhance agricultural resilience to weather extremes and climate variability
- (C) Promote innovation in agriculture by incorporating the latest water conservation technological advancements

The project description, scope of work, and deliverables should incorporate as many of the following actions and objectives as possible to illustrate how the project will achieve the aforementioned goals:

- Quantify actualized water savings with proven methodology and provide baseline water usage prior to project implementation
- Engage agricultural producers and water managers through educational outreach in the form of field days, workshops, seminars, or demonstrations in classroom settings and on farms involved in the projects
- Promote the adoption of innovative water conservation practices and technologies that result in improvements to irrigation efficiency and soil health
- Identify methods to measure and report water conservation performance metrics such as water usage, soil water holding capacity, and infiltration
- Determine the long-term sustainability, feasibility, and profitability of the conservation practice(s) by quantifying the return on investment
- Build upon the success of existing agricultural water conservation efforts
- Leverage funding support from local, state, federal, and private industry partners

Grant Amount

TWDB has up to \$1,500,000 available from the Agricultural Water Conservation Fund for Fiscal Year 2024 Agricultural Water Conservation Grants. Suggested grant request amounts are between \$50,000 and \$250,000 but requests can deviate. The TWDB awards these funds through a statewide competitive grants process and evaluates all proposals based upon the specific criteria set forth in this solicitation and application instructions. Eligible costs are those directly attributed to the project, including planning, design, purchase, acquisition, installation, construction, monitoring, reporting, administration, management, educational outreach, and dissemination of project findings. Indirect expenses such as the applicant's overhead are not eligible for reimbursement and will not count towards the local match when being evaluated by the technical review team. Eligible travel expenses of the contractor and their subcontractors are limited to the maximum amounts authorized for state employees by the General Appropriations Act. Any out-of-state travel expenses must be directly related to the approved scope of work in the contract and should be pre-approved by the Executive Administrator, or designated staff, prior to reimbursement.

Application Instructions

Applications must be consistent with the format provided in the Agricultural Water Conservation Grant Application instructions, which are located on the TWDB website at: www.twdb.texas.gov/about/contract_admin/request/ or available upon request from Antonio Delgado, Team Lead, Agricultural Water Conservation, at (512) 463-7984 or email at antonio.delgado@twdb.texas.gov.

Grant applicants must submit one digital copy to Bid-room@twdb.texas.gov by the Closing Due Date, 2:00 p.m., April 3, 2024, with a copy to: antonio.delgado@twdb.texas.gov.

Please include the subject line of **“FY 24 Ag Grant App, [Entity Name], [Amount].”**

Contact TWDB at agconservation@twdb.texas.gov if you have any questions regarding qualifications or grant contract specifics.

Application Selection Process and Criteria

Prior to technical review, each application will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. Incomplete applications and those that do not meet the provisions of this notice and the requirements of 31 Texas Administrative Code §§ 367.5–367.7, as identified in the application instructions, may be eliminated from competition.

Applications meeting the provisions of this notice will be scored by a technical review panel according to the criteria outlined in 31 Texas Administrative Code §§ 367.8 and 367.9, including (1) degree to which the applicant has used other available resources to finance the use for which the application is being made; (2) willingness and ability of the applicant to raise revenue; (3) commitment of the applicant to agricultural water conservation; and, (4) the water conservation benefits that will be gained by making the grant.

In addition to the required considerations and findings, the technical review panel will further evaluate the applications using the following criteria: (1) sound and practical approach for implementing project as per the request for applications guidelines, by achieving the goals; (2) clearly identified tasks that incorporate the actions and objectives, deliverables, products, and reporting timelines; (3) staff with the technical expertise needed to carry out the project; and, (4) proposed cost estimates (budget) that are reasonable, adequately justified, and include supplemental funding sources. Priority consideration may be given to projects focused on quantification of realized water savings.

Prior to approving a grant, TWDB must find that the grant funds will (1) supplement rather than replace money of the applicant (to aid in making this determination, the applicant must provide an operating budget illustrating the financial need for the grant funds); (2) serve the public interest (in evaluating this factor, the TWDB must include a finding that the grant will assist in the implementation of a water conservation water management strategy identified in the most recent applicable approved regional water plan or state

water plan); and, (3) further water conservation in the state (Texas Water Code §§17.900–17.902).

Funding and Partial Funding Provisions

TWDB reserves the right to reject all proposals and make no awards under this announcement. In addition, TWDB reserves the right to partially fund proposals by funding discrete activities, portions, or phases of a proposed project. TWDB also reserves the right to award funding in an amount greater than any stated limits per project, if applicable. If TWDB decides to partially fund a proposal, it will do so in a manner that does not prejudice any applicants or affect the basis upon which the proposal, or portion thereof, was evaluated or selected for award, and that maintains the integrity of the competition and the evaluation/selection process. TWDB reserves the right to reject parts of any or all applications if staff determines that the application(s) does not adequately meet the required criteria or if the funding available is less than the requested funding.

Negotiations with Selected Applicants

The applicable scope of work, deliverables, timelines, budgets, and contract terms will be negotiated after TWDB awards the selected applicants. Failure to arrive at mutually agreeable terms of a contract with the selected applicant will constitute a rejection of the Board's offer and may result in subsequent negotiations with other applicants.

Limitations on Grant Funding

Based on laws enacted by the 87th Texas Legislature, certain successful applicants will be asked to certify to the following in a contract for grant funding:

Required for Grants to Political Subdivisions:

Enforcement of Certain Federal Laws Regulating Firearms, Firearm Accessories, and Firearm Ammunition. The grant recipient must certify that it is not prohibited from receiving state funds under Texas Penal Code § 1.10(d) (related to federal laws regulating firearms, firearm accessories, and firearm ammunition). The grant recipient must also certify that, during the term of the contract, it will immediately notify the TWDB, in writing, of any suit against it by the Attorney General of Texas under Texas Penal Code § 1.10(f).

Required for Grants to Cities or Counties:

Enforcement of Public Camping Bans. The grant recipient must certify that it is not prohibited from receiving state grant funds under Texas Local Government Code § 364.004 (related to public camping bans). The grant recipient must also agree that, during the term

of the contract, it will immediately notify the TWDB, in writing, of any suit against it by the Attorney General of Texas under Texas Local Government Code § 363.003.

Required for grants to state agencies, including university systems or systems of higher education, cities, counties and special districts and authorities:

Firearm Suppressor Regulation. The grant recipient must certify that it is not prohibited from receiving state grant funds under Texas Government Code § 2.103 (related to the regulation of firearm suppressors). The grant recipient must also agree that, during the term of the contract, it will immediately notify the TWDB, in writing, of any suit against it by the Attorney General of Texas under Texas Government Code § 2.104.