

Request for Applications for Fiscal Year 2018 Agricultural Water Conservation Grants

The Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) solicits a request for applications for Fiscal Year 2018 Agricultural Water Conservation Grants. The total amount of the grants to be awarded under this request for applications by the TWDB shall not exceed \$600,000 from the Agricultural Water Conservation Fund. The rules governing the Agricultural Water Conservation Fund (31 Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 367) and application instructions are available upon request from the TWDB.

Summary of the Request for Applications

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

Due Date (Closing): 12:00 p.m., Wednesday, February 14, 2018

Anticipated Award Date: May 2018

Estimated Total Funding: up to \$600,000 total

Eligible Grant Amount: up to \$150,000 per project in categories 1, 2, and 3; up to \$100,000 in category 4, subject to Board approval

Eligible applicants: state agencies and political subdivisions (as defined by 31 Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 367)

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Agricultural Water Conservation Grant Categories

Applications should be consistent with the format provided in the Agricultural Water Conservation Grant Application Instructions document. Please contact the TWDB if you intend to apply. Applications should be in response to the following grant categories.

1. Equipment cost share and technology transfer

(Up to \$150,000 per selected project; minimum 50 percent local match requirement)

Funding is available for the purchase of agricultural water conservation equipment designed to monitor irrigation water use, implement irrigation scheduling, and/or improve upon irrigation efficiency. Examples of eligible equipment may include, but are not limited

to, soil moisture monitoring devices, remote management of irrigation systems, telemetry, supervisory control and data acquisition, weather stations, and metering equipment. Funding recipients should submit annual reports with irrigation water use data and an estimate of water savings for a period of five years following installation of the equipment.

2. Demonstrations of innovative and alternative production systems

(Up to \$150,000 per selected project; minimum 50 percent local match requirement)

Funding is available in this category for projects involving demonstrations of agricultural water conservation best management practices, innovative technologies, and alternative production systems. Potential types of projects might include hydroponic, aquaponic, greenhouse, or high-tunnel production systems. Projects should consist of field day demonstrations, research, and education activities to promote adoption of these advanced water conservation technologies by agricultural producers. Additional details and the exact scope of the study will be negotiated with the selected applicant(s). Funding recipients must provide quarterly progress reports and a comprehensive final report upon project completion.

3. Planning and design for irrigation system improvements

(Up to \$150,000 per selected project; minimum 50 percent local match requirement)

Funding is available in this category for planning and design of irrigation system improvements. Potential projects might include development of plans, engineering designs, and environmental assessments for irrigation conveyance system improvement projects. Additional details and the exact scope of the study will be negotiated with the selected applicant(s). Funding recipients must report progress on a quarterly basis and provide a draft and final report upon completion of the project.

4. Feasibility study of irrigating with produced water

(Up to \$100,000 per selected project; no minimum local match requirement)

Funding is available in this category to determine the feasibility of irrigating with produced water from the oil and gas sector. Projects should identify any legal requirements, permitting constraints, barriers to entry, and end user needs and include an analysis of the cost associated with using produced water for agricultural irrigation purposes. Projects may identify or involve a variety of potential end users but should specifically identify the potential for conserving freshwater for irrigation of agricultural products. Priority consideration may be given to applicants with established technologies and experience in the industry. Additional details and the exact scope of the study will be negotiated with the

selected applicant(s). Funding recipients must report progress on a quarterly basis and provide a draft and final report upon completion of the project.

Grant Amount

Through this announcement, the TWDB has up to \$600,000 available from the Agricultural Water Conservation Fund for Fiscal Year 2018 agricultural water conservation grants. The TWDB awards these funds through a statewide competitive grants process. The TWDB evaluates all proposals based upon the specific criteria set forth in this solicitation and application instructions. Unless otherwise specified in the individual grant category, eligible expenses typically include the cost of the capital equipment, materials, labor, preparation, installation, or administration directly associated with implementing and completing a conservation program or project. Overhead or indirect costs are not allowed as an eligible expense for reimbursement through the TWDB agricultural water conservation grants.

Application Criteria and Selection Process

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 may be eliminated from competition.

Applications meeting the provisions of this notice will be scored by a technical review panel. 31 TAC Sections 367.8 and 367.9 require that in reviewing an application for an agricultural water conservation grant, the TWDB shall consider the following administrative and technical criteria: commitment of the applicant to agricultural water conservation; benefits that will be gained by making the grant; degree to which the applicant has used other available resources to finance the use for which the application is being made; and the willingness and ability of the applicant to raise revenue and provide matching funds.

Prior to approving a grant, the TWDB must find that the grant funds will supplement rather than replace money of the applicant and serve the public interest. The TWDB shall 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 further water conservation in the state.

The technical review panel will evaluate the applications using the following criteria: sound and practical approach for implementing project as per the Request for Applications guidelines; clearly identified tasks, products, and reporting timelines; staff with the

technical expertise needed to carry out the project; and proposed costs estimate (budget) that are reasonable and adequately justified.

Priority consideration may be given to projects that promote the adoption of best management practices and water saving innovations; have higher levels of local match; and/or, include educational components directed at agricultural producers. All applicants should establish a metric for measuring and reporting water savings or improvements in water use efficiency as a direct result of project funding.

Funding and Partial Funding Provisions

The TWDB reserves the right to reject all proposals and make no awards under this announcement. In addition, the 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 the stated limit per project. If the 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. The 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. The TWDB retains the right to not award contract funds.

Negotiations with Selected Applicants

The applicable scope of work, deliverables, tasks timelines, and contract amount will be negotiated after the TWDB selects the most qualified applicants. Failure to arrive at mutually agreeable terms of a contract with the most qualified applicant shall constitute a rejection of the Board's offer and may result in subsequent negotiations with the next most qualified applicant.

Deadline for Submission of Applications

Applicants should submit four double-sided, double-spaced paper copies and one digital copy of completed applications to the TWDB on or before 12:00 p.m. on Wednesday, February 14, 2018. Applications can be directed either in person to Phyllis Thomas, Texas Water Development Board, Stephen F. Austin Building, Room 640E, 1700 North Congress Avenue, Austin, Texas 78701; or by mail to Phyllis Thomas, Texas Water Development Board, P.O. Box 13231 – Capitol Station, Austin, Texas 78711-3231.

Application instructions are available upon request from Cameron Turner, (512) 936-6090, cameron.turner@twdb.texas.gov, or online at <http://www.twdb.texas.gov>.