

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

Funding Opportunity Announcement No. BOR-DO-18-F005

WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I Grants for Fiscal Year 2018



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Policy and Administration
Denver, Colorado

November 2017

Section C. Eligibility Information

C.1. Eligible Applicants

Applicant Eligibility for New Watershed Groups

Applicants eligible to receive an award as a New Watershed Group include states, Indian tribes, local and special districts (e.g., irrigation and water districts), local governmental entities, interstate organizations, and non-profit organizations. To be eligible, applicants must also meet all of the following requirements:

- Significantly affect or be affected by the quality or quantity of water in a watershed
- Be capable of promoting the sustainable use of water resources
- Be located in the western United States or Territories as identified in the Reclamation Act of June 17, 1902, as amended and supplemented; specifically: Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Virgin Islands

Applicant Eligibility for Existing Watershed Groups

In order to be eligible to receive an award as an Existing Watershed Group, the applicant must be an eligible entity as described immediately above and must be either:

1. An existing watershed group, (i.e., a grassroots, non-regulatory legal entity that otherwise meets the definition of a watershed group as described above in *Section A.2. Objective of this Funding Opportunity Announcement*).
2. A participant in an existing watershed group that meets the definition of a watershed group as described above in *Section A.2. Objective of this Funding Opportunity Announcement*.

Those not eligible include, but are not limited to, the following entities:

- Federal Governmental entities
- Institutes of higher education, except cooperative watershed management organizations sponsored by institutes of higher education
- 501(c)(4) organizations
- 501(c)(6) organizations
- Individuals

C.2. Cost Sharing Requirements

There is no requirement for a non-Federal cost share contribution for Phase I activities. If the applicant is voluntarily providing a non-Federal cost share this must be noted in the budget proposal (see *Section D.2.2.7. Project Budget*).

C.3. Eligible Projects

C.3.1 Eligible Projects

Applicants can apply for funding for activities within one or more of the following three Task Areas. Note: The work described in Task Areas A-C must be completed for applicants to be eligible for funding under Phase II of the CWMP for the implementation of watershed management projects. However, Task Areas do not necessarily need to be completed through this program.

1. Task A - Watershed Group Development: Watershed group development activities include, but are not limited to:

- Hiring a watershed group coordinator to organize the group and coordinate its activities.
- Developing a mission statement, vision statement, and goals for the watershed group.
- Hiring a facilitator to assist with outreach to stakeholders.
- Conducting outreach activities, such as the creation of an outreach plan and information materials (e.g., brochures, advertisements, website, videos) and conducting stakeholder meetings to establish broad-based, diverse membership.
- Gathering information about issues and needs related to water quality and quantity within the watershed (e.g., through research, talking to government agencies and local universities).
- Conducting pre-planning activities, including outlining a watershed restoration plan, researching existing plans related to the watershed, collecting baseline information, and identifying restoration needs for the watershed.

Note: The development of *articles of incorporation, bylaws, and business practices* and *staff salaries and contractor costs* are eligible activities for both New and Existing Watershed Groups and can be completed as part of any Task Area. See *Section B.2. Applicant Category Guidance* for a description of New and Existing Watershed Groups.

2. Task B – Watershed Restoration Planning: Watershed restoration planning activities may include, but are not limited to:

- Completing a watershed restoration plan, improving on existing restoration plans, or conducting water quality or quantity studies needed to provide baseline information about the watershed.
- Conducting mapping and other technical analyses, including obtaining data, performing modeling, or developing goals and benchmarks for the restoration plan.
- Obtaining project management services or software technology required to formulate the watershed restoration plan.
- Interviewing watershed group members and stakeholders to gain an idea of projects that would improve the watershed.
- Working with watershed group members, landowners, Federal agencies, and state or local governments to determine how the watershed can be improved.
- Reviewing watershed-specific best management practices established by Federal, state, and local government agencies.
- Developing general watershed management project concepts or performing an analysis of the watershed to identify and prioritize watershed management projects. For example, creating a matrix within the watershed restoration plan that outlines and prioritizes watershed management projects.

Watershed Restoration Plan Guidance: A watershed restoration plan is a tool designed to help a watershed group plan for and implement restoration activities in their watershed. A watershed restoration plan should describe the issues of concern related to water resources within the watershed and identify potential solutions. Reclamation understands that watershed restoration plans may take different forms depending on the purpose for which they were developed. Rather than prescribing particular requirements, Reclamation encourages recipients to develop a restoration plan that best meets the needs of the watershed. However, recipients should consider that the Phase II funding opportunity, which provides funding for on-the-ground watershed management projects, prioritizes projects outlined in watershed restoration plans that are more holistic, addressing multiple issues related to water resources within the watershed, and plans developed by stakeholders with diverse interests. You can find watershed restoration plans completed by previously selected CWMP Phase I recipients on Reclamation’s website, www.usbr.gov/watersmart/cwmp/plans.html.

3. Task C - Watershed Management Project Design: Project design activities can include, but are not limited to:

- Completing an analysis in order to prioritize watershed management projects and identify specific project locations.
- Completing site-specific project design and engineering.
- Developing project timelines and milestones.
- Researching what type of site-specific environmental compliance will be necessary to implement a project, particularly if the applicant intends to seek Federal funding to implement the project in the future (e.g., under Phase II of this program). We recommend contacting your local Reclamation office (www.usbr.gov/main/offices.html) as part of such research, to discuss the required environmental and cultural resource compliance and costs associated with potential projects. If a potential project is located on land owned by a different Federal agency, other than Reclamation, we also recommend contacting that agency.

Note: If some monitoring, measurement, or other field work (e.g., water quality monitoring, vegetation surveys) is needed to inform the watershed restoration planning activities, such work may be eligible for funding so long as it comprises only a minor part of the work described in the proposal. Applicants should note that these activities may require environmental and cultural resource compliance. Applications containing these activities must budget for all associated compliance work and should discuss the required compliance. We recommend contacting your local Reclamation office (www.usbr.gov/main/offices.html) to discuss the required environmental and cultural resource compliance and associated costs prior to submitting your application.

C.3.2 Ineligible Projects

Projects not eligible for funding under this FOA include, but are not limited to, scientific research and the project types identified immediately below.

C.3.2.1. Other Planning Projects

Proposals for the development of planning efforts other than watershed restoration plans are not eligible for funding under this FOA. This includes proposals for the development of drought plans, appraisal investigations, feasibility studies, special studies, Basin Studies, or studies authorized under the Title XVI Water Recycling and Reuse Program, through P.L.102-575, as amended (43 USC 390h et seq.), or under the Rural Water Program, pursuant to the Rural Water Supply Act of 2006, P.L.109-451 (<https://www.usbr.gov/ruralwater/>).

Section E. Application Review Information

E.1. Technical Proposal: Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria portion should be addressed in the technical proposal section of the application. Applications will be evaluated against the evaluation criteria listed below and should thoroughly address each criterion and sub-criterion in the order presented. If the work described in your application is a phase of a larger project, only discuss the benefits that will result directly from the work discussed in the technical project description and that is reflected in the budget, not the larger project.

Note: Projects may be prioritized to ensure balance among the program task areas and to ensure that the projects address the goals and objectives of this FOA.

E.1.1. Evaluation Criterion A— Watershed Group Diversity and Geographic Scope (30 points)

Up to **30 points** may be awarded for this criterion. Sub-criteria are listed in descending order of importance. The purpose of this criterion is to ensure that funding is prioritized for watershed groups that will restore trust with local communities by encouraging collaboration between a diverse array of stakeholders, and improving dialogues and relationships between stakeholders within the watershed.

Proposals demonstrating that the new or existing watershed group will represent the maximum diversity of interests, including representatives of the different sectors that exist within the watershed (e.g., hydropower production; livestock grazing; agriculture; industry; state, local, and tribal governments) (see: *Section A.2. Objective of this Funding Opportunity Announcement*), will receive the highest priority consideration under this criterion. For example, in previous years, successful applicants targeted a diverse array of stakeholders that included farmers, irrigators, tourist and recreation groups, industry, environmental organizations, universities, and local governments.

Priority will also be given to those proposals that target stakeholders and project concepts for small to medium sub-basin sized watersheds, for example an approximate 8-digit hydrological unit code as defined by the USGS water.usgs.gov/GIS/huc.html, and which represent the full extent of the watershed.

Sub-criterion No. A1. Watershed Group Diversity

Points shall be awarded to proposals based on the extent to which the watershed group will restore trust with local communities by encouraging collaboration

between a diverse array of stakeholders, and improving dialogues and relationships between stakeholders within the watershed.

Please describe the efforts that you will undertake to ensure that the watershed group will include a diverse array of stakeholders, including outreach to stakeholders or collaborating with other groups or partners. If the watershed itself does not include a diverse set of interests and sectors, please provide an explanation of this also (e.g., some watersheds may not include affected stakeholders in all of the sectors identified in the definition of a “watershed group” provided in *Section A.2. Objective of this Funding Opportunity Announcement*). In responding to this sub-criterion, please include:

- A description of the stakeholders within the watershed that affect or are affected by the quantity or quality of water within the watershed (“affected stakeholders”).
- For New Watershed Groups, a description of the affected stakeholders within the watershed that support the formation of watershed group. To the extent possible, please identify the specific stakeholders or groups that support the formation of the watershed group, describe their interest in the watershed, and reference any letters of support or pledges/donations from affected stakeholders.
- For Existing Watershed Groups, an explanation of the current membership of the watershed group and whether the current membership is representative of the affected stakeholders within the watershed. In other words, if the watershed group is already diverse, please provide support demonstrating the diversity of the group.
- Details on how you plan to target affected stakeholders to ensure that your group will represent a diverse set of stakeholders within the watershed, such as engaging in outreach to include new members, or collaborating with different groups or partners (e.g., outreach or partnership activities, public meetings, newsletters, marketing materials, or recruitment of new members).
- A description of how the development of this New or Existing Watershed Group will improve dialogues and relationships with persons and entities bordering Federal lands, or entities relying on water deliveries from Reclamation.
- An explanation of how the development of this New or Existing Watershed Group will expand the lines of communication between Federal, state, and local governments; tribes; and local communities.

- Any other support demonstrating that the watershed group will include a diverse membership.

Sub-criterion No. A2. Geographic Scope

Under this sub-criterion, higher priority will be given to proposed or existing watershed groups representing the full geographic extent of the watershed. Applicants will receive points based on the extent to which they intend to do work across the entire extent of the watershed.

In addition, proposals that target small to medium sub-basin sized watersheds, for example an approximate 8-digit hydrological unit code as defined by the USGS, water.usgs.gov/GIS/huc.html, will be given priority over large or very small watersheds.

Please provide the following information in response to this sub-criterion:

- Provide a map illustrating the geographic boundaries of the area in which the watershed group will work.
- The map should also identify the location or boundaries of the stakeholder groups within the area and indicate which stakeholders are currently involved in the group and which will be targeted through outreach. If a map of stakeholder location cannot be provided, please describe the geographic scope of the area to the best of your knowledge.
- Describe the extent to which the planned membership of the watershed group will represent the full geographic scope of the area in which the group intends to work. If applicable, describe the extent to which the watershed group already represents the geographic scope of the area.
- Describe the efforts that you will undertake to ensure that the watershed group will target stakeholders that represent the full geographic scope of the area in which the watershed group will work.

E.1.2. Evaluation Criterion B — Addressing Critical Watershed Needs (35 points)

Up to **35 points** may be awarded under this criterion based on the extent of the critical issues or needs within the watershed that can be addressed by the New or Existing Watershed Group. The purpose of this criterion is to ensure that funding is prioritized for watershed groups that will contribute to the Department of the Interior's conservation stewardship legacy by utilizing science to identify best practices to manage water resources and adapt to changes in the environment. Sub-criteria are listed in descending order of importance.

Sub-criterion No. B1. Critical Watershed Needs or Issues

Please describe in detail the critical issues or needs occurring within the watershed including, for example: declining ecological resiliency, water shortages, flooding, structural impairments, water supply, water quality issues (e.g., addressing Total Maximum Daily Loads, or targeting high priority activities in your state's "Measure W" watersheds), endangered species issues, conflicts over water supply, and other related issues faced by affected stakeholders. Endangered species issues may focus on, but are not limited to, activities prioritized by resource agencies such as National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA-NMFS) or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and appropriate state natural resource agencies.

Applicants should consider contacting Federal, state, and local agencies; non-governmental organizations; and other affected stakeholders to discuss what critical issues are affecting the watershed.

Sub-criterion No. B2. Developing Strategies to Address Critical Watershed Needs or Issues

Please describe in detail how the group plans to positively contribute to the management of the issues and needs of the watershed through the activities described in the proposal in order to resolve conflict and maximize the water supply for beneficial use (i.e., through outreach and partnership building, through watershed restoration planning activities, and through the project design). Please address the following when responding to this sub-criterion:

Stakeholder Outreach and Partnership Building: Describe the stakeholder outreach and partnership building that will be conducted and explain how it will contribute to the management of the critical watershed issues and needs?

- If the watershed group will build on previous partnership building efforts, describe these efforts and how the watershed group will expand upon them through this grant.
- Will the group facilitate discussions about land use planning processes and land use designations that govern public use and access? If so, how?
- Will the group establish relationships with conservation organizations advocating for balanced stewardship and use of public lands, or advocating for increased access to the Department of the Interior lands for hunting, fishing, and other recreation? If so, how?

Watershed Restoration Planning: Describe the process the watershed group will use to develop a watershed restoration plan and how completing the plan will contribute to the management of the critical watershed issues and needs.

Section E. Application Review Information

- How does the group plan to gather information regarding the critical issues and needs of the watershed (e.g., contacting government agencies, talking to stakeholders, literature research, monitoring and modeling activities)? Will the group use science to identify best practices to manage land and water resources and adapt to changes in the environment? If so, how?
- Will the group identify opportunities to resolve conflicts? If so, how?
- Will the group complete an analysis to prioritize issues within the restoration plan?
- If the watershed group will build on previous efforts, describe these efforts and how the watershed group will expand upon them through the work proposed in the proposal.

Watershed Management Project Design: Describe the process that the watershed group will use to design projects and how completing the project design will contribute to the management of the critical watershed issues and needs.

- To the extent known, describe the project(s) for which the watershed group will complete a design.
- Will the group complete an analysis in order to prioritize watershed management projects and identify specific project locations? If yes, describe this analysis.
- What type of site-specific project design and engineering will the watershed group complete?
- How will the watershed group develop a project timeline and milestones for the project?
- Will the watershed group work with Reclamation's environmental and cultural resource staff to determine what type of site-specific environmental compliance will be necessary for the project(s) upon implementation (Federal environmental compliance will be required if the project is implemented with Federal funding or is located on Federal lands).
- If the watershed group will build on previous efforts, describe these efforts and how the watershed group will expand upon them through the work proposed in the proposal.

E.1.3. Evaluation Criterion C— Implementation and Results (25 points)

Up to **25 points** may be awarded to proposals based on the extent to which the proposal demonstrates that the applicant understands program requirements, is able to implement planned activities within the required two year time frame, and

the extent to which the proposed activities will complement existing Federal, state or regional planning efforts. Sub-criteria are in descending order of importance.

Sub-criterion No. C1. Understanding of and Ability to Meet Program Requirements

Applicants should describe their plan for implementing the proposed scope of work. Please include an estimated schedule that shows the stages and duration of the proposed work. Applicants may refer back to their Technical Proposal if this information is provided there and do not need to provide duplicate information in addressing this sub-criterion if it exists elsewhere in the applicant's proposal. The schedule should include:

- Major tasks (e.g., stakeholder outreach; development of bylaws, a mission statement, and articles of incorporation; development of a watershed restoration plan and project design and concepts)
- Milestones for each task
- Start and end dates for each task and milestone
- Costs for each task

Sub-criterion No. C2. Building on Relevant Federal, State, or Regional Planning Efforts

Please describe how the proposed activities of the watershed group will complement or meet the goals of relevant Federal, state or regional planning efforts. Such plans may include but are not limited to:

- Water conservation plans
- Drought contingency plans
- Plans that meet the criteria identified in the U.S Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Nonpoint Source Management Program
- Plans that meet the EPA's criteria for Watershed-Based Plans
- Or other relevant plans or planning efforts

Applicants should describe how the proposed activities of the watershed group will complement or meet the goals of applicable Federal, state or regional water plans. Reclamation suggests that groups contact Federal, state, or local agencies in your area to identify existing goals and plans relevant to the watershed group. Please reference any relevant plans, but do not include these plans as part of this application.

E.1.4. Evaluation Criterion D— Nexus to Department of the Interior Initiatives (10 points)

Up to **10 points** may be awarded based on the extent that the proposal demonstrates that the project will support a Department of the Interior initiative.

- Will the development of the watershed group support implementation of a Department of the Interior initiative (e.g., the National Drought Resiliency Partnership, the Colorado River Pilot System Conservation Program, or the Urban Water Federal Partnership)?
- Will the development of the watershed group benefit a basin where a Reclamation project, facility, or activity is located?
- Will the development of the watershed group support a complementary initiative of another Department of the Interior agency (e.g., a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife Refuge or Bureau of Land Management National Conservation Area)?
- Will the development of the watershed group positively impact federally threatened or endangered aquatic or riparian species?
- Will the development of the watershed group benefit any tribe(s)?

E.2. Review and Selection Process

The Federal government reserves the right to reject any and all applications that do not meet the requirements or objectives of this FOA. Awards will be made for projects most advantageous to the Federal Government. Award selection may be made to maintain balance among the eligible projects listed in this FOA. The evaluation process will be comprised of the steps described in the following subsections.

E.2.1. Initial Screening

All application packages will be screened to ensure that:

- The applicant meets the eligibility requirements stated in this FOA.
- The applicant meets the unique entity identifier and SAM registration requirements stated in this FOA (this may be completed up to 30 days after the application deadline).
- The application meets the content requirements of the FOA package, including submission of a technical proposal, including responses to the evaluation criteria, a funding plan, budget proposal, and budget narrative.