Tribal Nature-Based Solutions Draft Grant Guidelines

Frequently Asked Questions

Detailed explanations of the Tribal Nature-Based Solutions (TNBS) draft grant guidelines and the application process, materials required, and definitions can be found in the complete draft grant guidelines document found at https://resources.ca.gov/Initiatives/tribalaffairs.

- **What is the Tribal Nature-Based Solutions Grant?**
  - This program is a competitive grant program to support California Native American tribes located within the State in advancing multi-benefit nature-based solutions projects.

- **Who can apply for the grant?**
  - Eligible applicants include California Native American tribes and tribally led entities located in California.
    - Applications can be submitted on behalf of inter-tribal consortium, tribal conservation districts, or partnerships, but the application must show California Native American tribe(s) is actively partnering with and supporting the application through a signed letter or resolution from the chairperson of the tribe(s) and describe how the project will serve the supporting tribe(s) and community.
  - Non-tribal entities may support California Native American tribes in applying for the program, but the application must show a California Native American tribe(s) is actively partnering with and supporting the application through a signed letter or resolution from the chairperson of the tribe(s) and describe how the project will serve the supporting tribe(s) and community.

- **What are Time Sensitive Shovel Ready Ancestral Land Return Projects?**
  - In tribal consultations and workshops, tribal representatives have expressed the need to have quick funding available for time sensitive ancestral land return projects that are partially funded and need additional financial support to close. Many other state programs under CNRA have multi-benefit nature-based solutions funding and have already reviewed and approved partial funding for tribes' ancestral land return projects. To help coordinate state funding programs and to meet this need heard from tribes, CNRA reserves up to $25 million for time sensitive shovel ready multi-benefit nature-based solutions ancestral land return projects that are partially funded by another State of California grant program(s). These projects will be on accelerated timelines.

- **How does the application process work?**
  - Time Sensitive Shovel Ready Ancestral Land Return Projects will have a separate application process on an accelerated timeline.

o For the competitive grant program, there are 4 steps:

1. Applicants submit a Preliminary Project Proposal. During this stage, applicants will be asked to provide a project summary and public point of contact that will be posted on the TNBS website for other tribes and members of the public to coordinate with applicants on feedback, comments, concerns, and/or requests for collaboration or coordination.

2. Upon review, competitive applications will be invited to submit a full Project Proposal.

3. On a case-by-case basis, visits, presentations, and other supporting documents may be requested from applicants.

4. Finally, there will be final call for any supplemental or additional information before grant evaluation and award decisions.

- **How much can a grant request?**
  o For Planning grants, the minimum award amount is $50,000 and the maximum is $1,000,000.
  o For Implementation grants, the minimum award amount is $200,000 and the maximum award amount is $5,000,000.
  o For Ancestral Land Return grants, the minimum is $200,000 and the maximum award amount is $10,000,000.

- **What types of projects qualify for this grant?**
  o Eligible projects will focus on the following categories:
    ▪ Planning for multi-benefit nature-based solutions projects
    ▪ Implementation of multi-benefit nature-based solutions projects
    ▪ Return of ancestral lands for the purpose of advancing multi-benefit nature-based solutions projects.
  o Applicants may submit multiple applications for unique projects across the categories but cannot include aspects of the same project in multiple applications.

- **What documents does the preliminary grant proposal require?**
  o All project types will require Project Proposal Form, Project Summary, Project Questions, and Location Map. Template/instructions can be found in the Tribal Nature-Based Solutions draft grant guidelines document.
  o Please note that qualifying/final proposals will be asked to submit additional supporting documentation. More detailed information can be found in the draft grant guidelines.

- **How will the grant be evaluated and scored?**

  - Information provided in the proposal will be evaluated on how effectively the proposed project meets statutory requirements, funding priorities, and program objectives. Each project will be evaluated for eligibility utilizing answers to the questions in the Requirements and Project Need section. Points will be attributed to the answers to the questions within the Funding Priorities sections (Planning OR Implementation OR Return of Ancestral Lands) and the Organizational Capacity section and not to individual questions.

  - Please note that to achieve equitable distribution of funds, the State may consider additional factors including, but not limited to best value, regional distribution, type, and likelihood of success of projects.

- **What is the application timeline?**

  - The application timeline can be found within the grant application guidelines.

- **Where can I submit the grant?**

  - All materials should be submitted by email or mail. Email submissions are preferred.

    > tribalaffairs@resources.ca.gov or
    > California Natural Resources Agency
    > Attn: Tribal Nature-Based Solutions 715 P
    > Street, 20th Floor
    > Sacramento, CA 95814

- **Can I still apply if I don't have access to the internet?**

  - If you have barriers to accessing the internet, mail submissions are available at:

    > California Natural Resources Agency
    > Attn: Tribal Nature-Based Solutions 715 P
    > Street, 20th Floor
    > Sacramento, CA 95814

- **Where can I get assistance for this grant program?**

  - The California Natural Resources Agency will conduct online workshops and host office hours for technical assistance for applying for this program.

  - A list of office hours, workshop dates and times will be posted on the California Natural Resources Agency website at https://resources.ca.gov/Initiatives/tribalaffairs.

- **Can one apply for this grant even if they have other funding or plan to apply for other funding resources (ex: federal grants…)?**

  - Yes. In fact, priority will be given to planning projects that already have state or federal funds for some component of the applicant's project.

  - Priority will be given to planning projects that can show which specific state

or federal grant program the applicant is planning to apply to, and how state funding will make them a competitive or prepared applicant for that funding.

o Priority will be given to ancestral land return projects that have partial state, federal, tribal, or other funding for the purchase and maintenance of the property.

- **How much funding is available for each project category?**

  o There is $71 million dollars total available for the Tribal Nature-Based Solutions program. CNRA reserves the right to modify these allocations based on the types of funding sought.

- **What is encumbrance?**

  o Encumbrance refers to the State having committed the funding at issue via a grant or contract. Funds are available for encumbrance until June 30, 2027, and all relevant costs associated with maintenance must be spent by January 1, 2029. Final invoices must be received no later than March 31, 2029 to meet year-end accounting deadlines or funds may be forfeited.

  o The $1 million associated with OPC's Tribal Small Grants Program are available for encumbrance by June 30, 2025, with final invoices due by March 31, 2027.

- **Is match funding required to be eligible for this grant?**

  o There is no match requirement to participate.

- **What is CEQA and Will My Project Trigger it for State or Local Agencies?**

  o The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires government agencies to consider the environmental consequences of their actions (including their funding decisions related to certain projects) before approving those actions or approving such funding. The CEQA Guidelines explain how to determine whether a decision to approve a project will trigger environmental review, what steps are involved in the environmental review process, and the required content of environmental documents.

  o CNRA requires its grantees to help it identify required environmental review and undertake that review on its behalf as part of any funding decision or approval. CNRA will independently evaluate that environmental analysis and evidence supporting it when determining whether and to what extent CEQA is triggered.

  o Generally, even if a funding decision could trigger CEQA, CNRA will consider whether the decision is exempt from CEQA as a first step. There are two types of CEQA exemptions: (1) statutory exemptions and (2) categorical exemptions. CNRA encourages all applicants to review the Governor's "cutting green tape" initiative, Public Resources Code section 21080.56, and CEQA 202 Webinar Series: Exemptions. This will help applicants propose draft notice of exemptions with their projects where applicable as a way to streamline this process.

- o Please refer to the resources below to learn more about CEQA. If you have questions about whether funding a particular project or plan would be exempt, you are encouraged to reach out to CNRA grant managers.

- **Will my project require a limited waiver of sovereignty?**

  - o Projects may require limited waivers of sovereign immunity and post project monitoring and reporting, which will be determined on a case-by-case basis and dependent on the type and scope of the project. CNRA will avoid seeking a limited waiver of sovereign immunity when possible and will strive to notify applicants early in the grant application review process if it is anticipated a limited waiver of sovereign immunity will be necessary. CNRA is committed to working collaboratively with California Native American tribes on tailoring limited waiver of sovereign immunity terms and conservation and public access agreements or deed restrictions to support tribal priorities while also meeting the state's obligations under the law.

- **Is any construction allowed on land purchased with CNRA grant funds?**

  - o Substantial construction (e.g., housing) of any kind is prohibited by the terms of this grant agreement. Traditional or nature-based structures that require excavation or the pouring of a foundation may be allowed depending on the specifics of the construction plan and will be considered on a case-by-case basis by CNRA.

- **Is it permissible to live on the land?**

  - o If there are existing structures on the property, they may be used as intended by design, but new residential structures are not permitted. (See above) There are no restrictions on people living or camping on the property as long as it does not violate the necessary conservation protections and the nature-based solutions that will be enacted.

- **If I submit an application on behalf of a tribe, can I transfer the ownership and management of that application to the tribe during the selection process or the grant execution process?**

  - o The application cannot transfer from one legal entity to another prior to the execution of the grant. Personnel changes that result in a different contact person or manager within the original entity that submitted the application are permitted.

- **Is it permissible for land purchased with program monies to be used for profit or otherwise as an economic resource?**

  - o Yes, as long as the creation, operation and management of the enterprise does not violate program guidelines, grant agreement, or the terms of the conservation protections that will be placed on the property.

- **Will there be any further funding rounds for this grant program?**
  - o This is not an automatically recurring grant, but it is possible for the California Legislature to appropriate additional funding for future funding cycles.

- **Can the funding request change between Steps 1 and 2 of the grant approval process?**
  - o Funding increase requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis; however, neither the project scope nor purpose can substantially change. CNRA reserves the right to deny requests for increased funds and award partial funding.

- **Does the participation of a paid contract/consulting service in the grant writing process preclude the applicant from using the same contractor for the purposes of implementing the project if awarded?**
  - o No, a contractor contributing to the development of a grant proposal is not prohibited from receiving funds should the grant be awarded. The only exception to this would be if the consulting firm were somehow paid by the government (e.g. through SGC/OPC/EPA) to provide technical assistance in grant-writing. In this case, the consultant would be disqualified from receiving grant funds.

- **Are multiple appraisals required for applications where acquisition of property may go to multiple tribes through a single award?**
  - o No, a single appraisal is sufficient regardless of how the applicant decides to divide a property amongst tribal recipients.

Some helpful things to consider when submitting your application:

DO
- Provide confirmation of intertribal consultation on your project
- Respond to each proposal prompt in the program guidelines and application template.
- Stay within the character limits for each question. Spaces do not count as characters. Information provided beyond the character limits will not be read or considered.
- Closely align your project goals with the Natural and Working Lands Smart Strategy and/or Pathways 30 x 30 priorities and/or the Ocean Protection Council Priorities. Provide direct citations, as applicable.
- Label application attachments as they are referenced in Guidelines checklist.
- Include PDF of Proposal.

- Make sure your cost estimates are clear with supporting documentation. We understand that particularly in the earlier stages of a project, it's not always possible to provide a completely accurate cost estimate. If you are making a rough estimate, please provide a conservative value and the information used to determine the rough estimate, and what resources will be used at a later date to refine that estimate. Please note, the CNRA cannot award additional funds that are in excess of the original estimate.
- Provide documentation of any existing partial funding. Please understand that other grant funds that have been applied for, but not yet awarded, do not count for partial funding in this program. Please do indicate other grant programs you are applying for as potential partial funding.
- If submitting multiple applications, please list each project name and specify which project is prioritized by the tribe.
- Provide a secondary point of contact and/or update CNRA in the event that your tribe's point of contact changes.
- If submitting documents to CNRA via an online portal or other automated means of document storage, please send additional copies of those documents to your CNRA grant representative and request that they be stored in your internal documents folder.

DO NOT
- Include construction of structures (e.g., houses, buildings, etc.) as part of your proposal.
- Request funding in excess of the maximum amount permitted in the guidelines.
- Include any sensitive information regarding sacred sites, artifacts, etc. that you wouldn't want released to the public.
- Exceed specified character limits in your application.
- Include aspects of multiple projects in one proposal.

Tips for Applicants / Common Mistakes and How to Avoid Them

- Applicants can best strengthen their application by clearly linking project objectives to multi-benefit, nature-based solutions highlighted in the *Pathways to 30 x 30 Strategy,* Natural *and Working Lands Smart Climate Strategy*, and the Ocean Protection Council's *Tribal Engagement Strategy* in addition to the funding priorities listed in the program guidelines. The significance of a project to your tribe is very important to us as well, but in order for it to be competitive in the context of a grant program, it needs to be closely aligned with the program's grant guidelines and the implementation of nature-based solutions.
- If an application prompt asks you to limit answers to a character limit (4,000, for example), remember that that is an important opportunity to use that space to tell us about your project. Answers that are notably brief can sometimes be seen as

less thorough or perceived as having a lack of importance on the part of the writer. As much as the review committee may appreciate short, concise answers, it's still important to provide as much detail about your project as possible while not exceeding the character limit. Keep in mind that every question asked is an opportunity for you to tell the scoring committee how amazing your project is!

Resources:

- o [Complete CEQA Guidelines Handbook](https://www.califaep.org/statute_and_guidelines.php) at https://www.califaep.org/statute_and_guidelines.php

- o [Getting Started with CEQA](https://opr.ca.gov/ceqa/getting-started/) by Office of Planning and Research at https://opr.ca.gov/ceqa/getting-started/

- o [Cutting the Green Tape: CEQA and Restoration Permitting Tools](https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Watersheds/Cutting-Green-Tape) at https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Watersheds/Cutting-Green-Tape

- o [CEQA 101](https://opr.ca.gov/ceqa/docs/20210809-CEQA_101.pdf) at https://opr.ca.gov/ceqa/docs/20210809-CEQA_101.pdf

- o [CEQA 202 Series Webinar: What is a "Project" Under CEQA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iNuDl5lEv9Q&t=1s) at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iNuDl5lEv9Q&t=1s

- o [CEQA 202 Webinar Series: Exemptions](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zVD5zjFcxc8) at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zVD5zjFcxc8