



NATURE-BASED
CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

Local Conservation Corps Nature- Based Solutions Grant Program

**Grant Guidelines
Revised August 2023**

Funded by:



Table of Contents

I. Overview.....	3
II. Program Requirements.....	5
III. Application Process & Instructions	8
IV. Grant Project Administration.....	10
V. Reporting Requirements	14
VI. Appendices.....	15

Technical Assistance & Program Support

The California Conservation Corps will provide ongoing technical assistance and other support to Applicants. Examples of technical assistance include but are not limited to:

- Guidelines & Eligibility Workshops – TBD
- Online or in-person support with project development
- Online or in-person support with preparing an application and required documents

For all questions related to the grant agreement and the administration of grant funds and policies, please contact your designated Grant Coordinator:

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- Civicorps
- Los Angeles Conservation Corps
- Orange County Conservation Corps
- Sacramento Regional Conservation Corps
- San Francisco Conservation Corps
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- Fresno Local Conservation Corps
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- San Jose Conservation Corps
- Urban Corps of San Diego County

I. Overview

Introduction

On October 7, 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom signed his Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) [Executive Order \(EO\) N-82-20](#) elevating the role of natural and working lands in the fight against climate change and advancing biodiversity conservation as an administration priority. It called for restoring nature and landscape health to deliver on California's climate change goals and other critical priorities, including improving public health and safety, securing our food and water supplies, and achieving greater equity across the State. The California Natural Resources Agency has been charged with administering programs and initiatives under the NBS directive and has distributed funds to various departments to advance NBS objectives and goals.

30x30 Initiative

As part of EO N-82-20, it is the goal of the State to conserve at least 30% of California's land and coastal waters by 2030 to support the global effort to combat the biodiversity and climate crises. California's 30x30 initiative will expand enduring conservation measures across a broad range of landscapes, waterways, and seascapes to achieve three key objectives:

- 1) Protect and restore biodiversity
- 2) Expand access to nature, and
- 3) Mitigate and build resilience to climate change

The Budget Act of 2022 (Assembly Bill 179) appropriated funding to the California Conservation Corps (CCC) to implement NBS programs and projects through grant funding to Certified Local Conservation Corps (LCC) and Tribal Nations to advance the objectives of EO N-82-20.

With support from the CCC, LCCs will implement projects and programs designed to provide educational and career pathways for young adults while working projects on natural and working lands that do one or more of the following:

- a) Support sustainable land management practices to tackle environmental, social, and economic challenges,
- b) Promote biodiversity protection, habitat restoration, wildfire-resilient, sustainably managed landscapes and other conservation outcomes,
- c) Accelerate natural removal of carbon and build climate resilience in our forests, wetlands, urban greenspaces, agricultural soils, and land conservation activities in ways that serve all communities and in particular disadvantaged and climate vulnerable communities, and
- d) Expand equitable outdoor access and recreation for all.

Funds Available

For the 2022/2023 State Fiscal Year (FY 22/23), the CCC was authorized by the Department of Finance (DOF) to distribute \$12,500,000 in NBS funds to certified LCCs. The Budget Act of 2023 (Assembly Bill 221) authorized an additional \$12,500,000 for FY 22/23 and an additional \$11,000,000 for FY 23/24. Total funding appropriated to certified LCCs is **\$36,000,000**.

This grant program will be administered on a non-competitive basis and each certified LCC will receive an equal allocation of **\$2,571,428**.

Funding is divided into two enactment years (ENY):

- **ENY 2022:** \$1,785,714. LCCs have until June 30, 2029 to expend.
- **ENY 2023:** \$785,714. LCCs have until June 30, 2030, to expend.

Project applications will be accepted on a rolling basis beginning January 2023 and accepted until March 31, 2027. The CCC will actively monitor grant funds allocated to each LCC to ensure the funds are being spent in a timely manner, ENY 2022 funds are expended by April 30, 2029 and that the LCC is on track to complete all approved projects by April 30, 2030. Unutilized funds may be reallocated by the CCC to other LCCs to ensure the liquidation of all appropriated funds.

Calendar of Key Dates

- January 11, 2022: Solicitation period begins
- January 11, 2022 – March 31, 2027: Applications are accepted on a rolling-basis
- June 30, 2027: All funds must be encumbered

ENY 2022:

- April 30, 2029: All project work must be completed and all funds expended
- May 15, 2029: Last day to reconcile advances and submit invoices for reimbursement
- June 30, 2029: Funding appropriation expires

ENY 2023:

- April 30, 2030: All project work must be completed and all funds expended
- May 15, 2030: Last day to reconcile advances and submit invoices for reimbursement
- June 30, 2030: Funding appropriation expires

The CCC will track the drawdown of grant funds for each enactment year.

II. Program Requirements

Applicant Eligibility

To be eligible to receive grant funds under this program, the Applicant must:

- Be certified by the CCC in accordance with PRC § 14507.5 for fiscal years 2022/2023 and 2023/2024;
- Have the fiscal viability and operational capacity to complete the proposed project on a reimbursement basis and comply with all State policies; and
- Maintain a financial management system that, as determined by an Independent Auditor, has adequate accounting practices and procedures, internal controls, audit trails, and cost allocation procedures to ensure accurate disclosure of project costs.

The CCC reserves the right to conduct due diligence to determine an Applicant's eligibility. This may include confirming there are no outstanding legal actions adjudicated or pending against an Applicant that would undermine the ability to carry out the project and/or contacting other public agencies to inquire about an Applicant's current or past performance in complying with an agency's grant or contract management policies.

Statutory Requirements

All projects funded under this program must comply with EO N-82-20 and all other applicable state laws, including:

- All projects and programs must advance the objectives of the NBS grant program and comply with EO N-82-20, including reporting requirements.
- Only currently certified LCCs in accordance with PRC § 14507.5 are eligible to apply.
- All projects must comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Division 13 (commencing with Section 2100)
- All Applicants must obtain three bids for contract work, supplies, and materials costing at or above \$10,000 or submit a non-competitive justification form.
- The Applicant is responsible for ensuring the project complies with all applicable current laws and regulations.

Eligible Proposals

Eligible proposals must include workforce education and career pathway elements and implement the objectives EO N-82-20 through one or more of the following strategies:

- a) Support sustainable land management practices to tackle environmental, social, and economic challenges,
- b) Promote biodiversity protection, habitat restoration, wildfire-resilient, sustainably managed landscapes and other conservation outcomes,
- c) Accelerate natural removal of carbon and build climate resilience in our forests, wetlands, urban greenspaces, agricultural soils, and land conservation activities in ways that serve all communities and in particular disadvantaged and climate vulnerable communities, and
- d) Expand equitable outdoor access and recreation for all.

Proposals may be for individual projects or program-level initiatives that include eligible projects and address the strategies listed above.

Program-level Initiatives include, but are not limited to:

- Establishing a full-time, half-time, or seasonal crew wholly dedicated to NBS projects and initiatives,

- Developing and implementing a curriculum for workforce education, training and career pathways for Corpsmembers to learn about and/or find jobs in sustainable land management, biodiversity protection, and climate adaptation strategies, which includes project work.
- Hiring youth intern positions for capacity-building and organizational operational needs to carry out eligible projects under the NBS program.
- Other programmatic, staffing, or crew-based initiatives that address the priorities of NBS through project work and/or career pathways.

If an LCC has an initiative, structure, or program idea that is not listed above, please contact the assigned Grant Coordinator to discuss and the CCC will work with the LCC to ensure eligibility with the NBS program.

If an LCC elects to establish an NBS crew under a program-level initiative, please note the following:

The LCC will be responsible for developing and implementing their own projects; however, projects must be submitted to and approved by the CCC prior to starting to ensure eligibility and CEQA compliance, as well as for reporting purposes.

No less than four weeks prior to the scheduled start of the project, Grantee must submit the following information to the Grant Coordinator:

- Project name
- Project partner
- Estimated start and end dates
- Timeline
- Project photos
- Project area map – see page 8 for map requirements
- Project type, scope, and quantified deliverables
- Description of Workforce Education and Career Pathways element(s)
- Project CEQA Compliance Documentation – Please see Appendix C regarding CEQA compliance.
 - Filed Notice of Exemption or Notice of Determination
 - CEQA Certification of Compliance Form
- Project NEPA Documentation (if applicable)

The project will be reviewed for statutory CEQA compliance and Grantee will be notified within 7 business days of receiving the project information if there are any concerns with the project, or if it is approved to move forward.

NBS projects initiated and/or expenses incurred without the written approval of the CCC will not be eligible for reimbursement.

Eligible NBS projects, regardless of proposal type, include but are not limited to:

- Habitat Conservation and Restoration
Examples:
 - Invasive plant removal
 - Native plant/tree planting
 - Planting drought-resistant vegetation
- Forest Health and Wildfire Resilience (including emergency fire response)
Examples:
 - Vegetation management/brush clearance
 - Removal of dead and dying trees
 - Construction of fuel breaks

- Urban and Community Greening

Examples:

- Native tree planting
- Building urban and community gardens
- Composting
- Removing asphalt to restore natural areas

- Equitable Outdoor Access and Recreation

Examples:

- Construction of pedestrian, bike, and/or trail pathways in Disadvantaged Communities
- Construction or restoration of park infrastructure and features in Disadvantaged Communities

- Sustainable and Climate-Smart Agriculture

Examples:

- Agricultural conservation acquisition
- Improving soil health
- Groundwater recharge
- Repurposing cropland
- Implementing the use of organic waste in ways that prioritize the ecosystem and biological health, such as in animal feed, compost creation, manure markets, orchard recycling, and mulching

III. Application Process & Instructions

The application form and all required supporting documents can be downloaded here: <https://ccc.ca.gov/what-we-do/funding-opportunities/local-conservation-corps/>. Forms are also available upon request.

Application Documents

NBS applications will be accepted on a rolling basis. The review period will begin when the Grant Coordinator receives a complete application that includes all of the following documentation:

1. Completed Application Form

- The application form should be clear, thorough, and detailed with all questions and sections completed. Avoid using “N/A” by stating clearly why a question or section does not apply to the project.
- For individual/standalone project proposals, the Project Partner/Sponsor should take an active and primary role in assisting the LCC in completing the application form, especially as it relates to the overall purpose and objective of the project, how it meets the goals and objectives of the Nature-Based Solutions program, and the specific project activities and deliverables.

2. CCC Form 510 – Budget Estimate Form

- The CCC Form 510 is a standardized form and budget line items are examples only. To enhance clarity, delete any budget line items and categories from the template that will not be used. Note that some example categories or line items may not be eligible – always consult the Eligible Costs section.
- Round to the nearest whole number for total costs, not exceeding available funding.

3. Hourly Rate Justification Form and Narrative (if applicable)

- The CCC Form 509 is a standardized form and rates should be based on an approved hourly rate for all projects completed during a given Fiscal Year, regardless of program. The LCC shall base their hourly reimbursement rate on direct costs associated with operating natural resource crews during the previous fiscal year. This rate will remain consistent throughout the program.
- An LCC may request an adjustment to their Corpsmember hourly rate during the year if their actual costs change due to circumstances external to the LCC (e.g., state or locally mandated wage increases). The LCC shall submit a Change Request for approval with documentation to the CCC 30 days in advance. The new hourly rate cannot be applied retroactively to Corpsmember hours. An increased hourly rate will not result in an increase of the total project grant amount.

4. Project Area Map(s) (individual/standalone project proposals)

Each project application must include at least one project area map that clearly shows the location of the work, the project area’s boundaries, and relevant topographical features. The map(s) must include:

- Clearly labeled project acreage.
- Clearly labeled project area boundaries.
- Nearby roads, structures, streams, lakes, creeks, staging areas and other landmarks.

For projects that are part of a larger plan and include multiple features that are not applicable to the submitted application, the map must include a map legend that clearly identifies each feature of the map.

For projects on Private Property, maps must also include the Assessor's Parcel Numbers (APNs) for each property included in the project area.

5. Project Photos (individual/standalone project proposals)

Project application packets must include at least three "before" photos of the project location. These photos should be clear, relevant photos of the site as it currently exists and be able to represent the progress of the project through completion. The photo taker should note the GPS location and directional view of each photo to refer back to for the "after" photos required for the completion packet. Please email original, high-resolution files of the photos.

6. CEQA Documentation (individual/standalone project proposals)

Evidence of compliance with CEQA, or a detailed summary describing the status of CEQA must be submitted with the application. A proposal will not be approved until CEQA compliance is documented and received.

**See Appendix C for detailed information and instructions on how to comply with CEQA and limited suspensions of CEQA compliance.*

In certain circumstances, the CCC **may** be able to act as Lead Agency for CEQA if all NEPA documents are completed and a Categorical Exclusion was determined. Please contact your Grant Coordinator for more information.

7. NEPA Documentation (individual/standalone project proposals, if applicable)

If the project is located on federal land or is receiving federal funds, documentation of NEPA compliance must be submitted with the application in addition to CEQA documentation. Request the NEPA environmental review and decision document from the implementing agency.

Application Review Process

Please allow 30 days from the date the CCC receives a complete application with all required attachments for the full review by the CCC. The CCC Review Team will review all submitted applications according to the requirements listed in these guidelines.

Applicant will be notified if their application is approved and the Grant Coordinator will initiate the process to execute a grant agreement.

Appeals Process

An Applicant may file an appeal regarding the denial of a submitted application by the CCC Grants Manager within 30 calendar days of the date of notification of any decision. Written appeals shall be submitted directly to the CCC's Senior Deputy Director or designated authority. The Senior Deputy Director may request additional information. Upon receiving the additional information, a decision will be rendered in 30 calendar days.

If needed, a second level appeal shall be made to the CCC's Director. The second level appeal shall be made within 30 calendar days of the date of the Senior Deputy Director's decision/notification. Upon receiving the second level appeal, the CCC Director shall review all the information submitted. The CCC Director may request additional information. Upon receiving the additional information, the CCC Director shall have 30 calendar days to review and render a decision. The second level appeal shall include a full and complete written statement specifying the grounds of protest and must be based on the process and/or procedures used in the review and recommendation of application for awards. The CCC Director's decision shall be final.

IV. Grant Project Administration

Approval and Grant Agreement Execution

Once the application is approved by the CCC, a grant agreement will be prepared. Please allow 10-15 business days from the date of project approval for grant agreement preparation and execution. Grant agreements are fully executed when both the Grantee's authorized signatory and the CCC's Deputy Director of Administration have signed the grant agreement.

After approval, the Grantee must receive a fully executed grant agreement BEFORE beginning work or otherwise incurring any expenses.

All projects must be completed by April 30, 2030.

Eligible Costs

Only direct project-related costs and indirect costs that can be directly tied to the implementation of an approved NBS program and/or project, incurred during the project performance period specified in the grant agreement, will be eligible for reimbursement. All eligible project costs must be supported by the appropriate documentation and must be able to hold up to a State audit.

- **Direct Project Personnel** – Costs for the services of Grantee's employees directly engaged in implementation and execution of the program and/or project, which may include Corpsmember labor, project/program managers, other staff directly involved in program administration and/or project coordination and required technical consultants for projects.
 - Costs for the services of Grantee's employees directly engaged in project execution must be computed according to Grantee's prevailing wage or salary scales, and may include benefits such as vacation, sick leave, Social Security contributions, etc., that are customarily charged to the Grantee's various projects.
 - Costs charged to the project must be computed on actual time spent on the project and evidenced by time and attendance records describing the work performed on the project as well as payroll records. Overtime costs are allowed under the Applicant's established policy provided the regular work time was devoted to the same project.
 - Direct personnel responsible for coordinating and supervising crews must be captured in the Hourly Rate Justification Form and **cannot** be included as a separate budget line item. **The Corpsmember Hourly Rate is capped at \$50 per hour.**
- **Equipment, Supplies and Materials** – Costs for equipment, supplies, and materials directly related to the implementation of the program or project.
 - Supplies and materials may be purchased for a specific project or may be drawn from a central stock, providing they are claimed at a cost no higher than that paid by the Grantee.
 - Supplies that are part of the standard complement of tools and equipment given to all Corpsmembers, including Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and hand tools, should be captured in the Hourly Rate Justification Form.
 - Equipment may be leased, rented, or purchased, whichever is most economical. If equipment is purchased, its residual market value must be returned to the State or deducted from the final retention payment upon completion of the project. Owned equipment may be charged to the

grant in accordance with the Grantee's normal accounting practices. Local prevailing rental rates may be used as a guide.

- Costs for fuel and projected maintenance for leased, rented, or owned vehicles may be claimed under the project. Note that vehicle costs can only be claimed as **EITHER** part of the Hourly Rate Justification **OR** the Budget Estimate. A tracking log (daily use or mileage) will be required as source documentation for the proportional amounts of these costs that can be attributed to the project. See Appendix D for the tracking log requirements.
- Acknowledgment signage is encouraged but optional for this program.
- Costs associated with Corpsmember Support Services and removing barriers to success for NBS-funded corpsmembers, including but not limited to meal and transportation vouchers or cards.
- **Community Engagement** – Costs of engaging community members through community meetings and events directly related to the project are eligible.
- **Indirect Costs/Overhead** – Reimbursable indirect expenses are the necessary overhead costs that have been incurred for common or joint objectives and are incidentally related to the project. Indirect costs include the appropriate pro-rata allocation of expenses that are regularly assigned to all projects in accordance with the standard accounting practices of the Grantee. Overhead should be included as a line item in the approved project budget and the amount is **limited to a maximum of 15%** of total direct costs of a grant.
- **Contingency** – Up to 10% of the grant may be budgeted for unanticipated “contingency” costs. All such costs must be eligible per these Guidelines. Contingency funding is available for use in any of the budget categories except indirect costs. Explanation and approval may be required prior to expenditure of contingency funds.
- **Other Expenditures** – In addition to the major categories of expenditures, funding may be provided for miscellaneous costs necessary for project execution at the State's discretion. Please contact your Grant Coordinator to determine if an OE&E cost not already listed is eligible.

Capital Acquisitions and Facility Development projects are not eligible under this program.

Changes to an Approved Project/Program

Project scope changes are allowed. Proposed changes to the approved program or project Scope of Work must be requested using the CCC Form 513 – Grant Change Request. Changes must be approved by the CCC before implementation. Changes to the scope of work cannot be requested after the Project Performance Period has ended.

- **Changes to Deliverables**

Proposed changes must continue to meet the conditions and criteria described in these Guidelines and must not include any modifications that would significantly alter the Project/Program's purpose, impact, and/or eligibility set forth in the Grantee's application.

- **Changes to Budget**

The total dollars of a category in the Budget Estimate may be increased by up to 10% through reallocation of funds from another category (with the exception of Contingency), without prior approval. However, the Grantee shall notify the Grant Coordinator in writing when any such reallocation is made

and must identify both the item(s) being increased and those being decreased. Any cumulative increase or decrease of more than 10% from the original budget amount of a category must be approved in writing by the CCC through a Grant Change Request Form. The total amount of the Grant Funds may not be increased.

Payment of Grant Funds

Payments will be made on a reimbursement basis. All eligible reimbursement requests must be paid out by the LCC to the vendor before the CCC will approve a payment request. Only costs incurred during the Project Performance Period as defined in the executed Grant Agreement will be eligible for reimbursement. Indirect costs may only be incurred when a project is currently active.

All supporting documentation must demonstrate that the invoiced amounts are for valid expenditures incurred and that the expenditures are consistent with the intended purpose of the grant agreement.

Please see Appendix D for detailed information on submitting Grant Reimbursement Requests and required information.

Retention

10% of funds will be retained from each payment request. To obtain a retention payment, a Project Completion Report must be submitted to the CCC. A final site visit may be conducted. The CCC recommends that Grantees submit retention payments only after all such activities are completed.

Note: If the project is completed within one month and/or the billing includes a single transaction, retention may be waived upon receipt of the project completion report.

Advance Payments

Government Code (GC) §11019 authorizes the CCC to make advanced payments of up to 25% of the total grant amount, with controls in place, if it is determined that an advance is essential for the effective implementation of the project.

Please see Appendix D for detailed information on how to submit an advance request and the requirements associated with receiving one.

Site Visits

CCC staff and staff from other agencies, such as Department of Finance (DOF), State Controller's Office and/or Natural Resources Agency, may make periodic site visits to determine if NBS-funded projects are consistent with the Guidelines. A minimum 24-hour advance notification will be provided. In addition, a final site visit may be conducted for all projects before final retention payments will be approved and issued.

Audit Requirements

The CCC and all Grantees are subject to audits of grant funding. If the project is selected for audit, the Grantee will be contacted in advance. The Grantee must provide a copy of any document, paper, record, or the like requested by the auditor.

Audits determine if:

- Expenditures were made according to the established criteria and processes;
- Expenditures were consistent with the intent of the Grant program; and
- Expenditures achieved the intended outcomes.

Additionally, the CCC may conduct intermittent documentation reviews to ensure project requirements are met and in compliance with the grant agreement.

Accounting Requirements

The Grantee must maintain an accounting system that:

- Complies with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP);
- Accurately reflects fiscal transactions, with the necessary controls and safeguards;
- Provides a good audit trail, including original source documents such as purchase orders, receipts, progress payments, invoices, timecards, canceled checks, etc.; and
- Provides accounting data so the total cost of each individual project can be readily determined.

Records Retention

The Grantee shall retain records for a period of 5 years after project completion. A project is considered complete upon the receipt of the final grant payment from the State. If selected for an audit in year 5 of records retention, records should be retained an additional 1 year following the audit.

V. Reporting Requirements

The CCC is required, as specified in the Budget Act of 2022 (AB 179), to annually report to the Legislature and the Legislative Analyst's Office on the Local Corps Nature-Based Solutions grant program. Among other items, the CCC is required to report a summary of each of the projects funded and their specific, measurable outcomes, including outcomes related to workforce development and environmental protection and restoration. The CCC has grant administration and monitoring policies in place to ensure required information and project/program data is reported accurately and timely to comply with all reporting requirements.

Grant Quarterly Reports

Quarterly Reports must be submitted and describe the status of the project or program, a narrative describing activities and accomplishments during the reporting period, a list of deliverables and their measurable outcomes, budget expenditures incurred during the reporting period, and progress photos.

Quarters are determined using the State Fiscal Year of July 1 to June 30. Reports are due on the last business day of the month following the completion of the previous quarter. Reporting periods for each quarter are as follows:

- Quarter 1 (July 1 – September 30) is due the last business day in October
- Quarter 2 (October 1 – December 31) is due the last business day in January
- Quarter 3 (January 1 – March 31) is due the last business day in April
- Quarter 4 (April 1 – June 30) is due the last business day in July

Reducing Greenhouse Gases

It is a priority of the California Natural Resources Agency to fund projects that reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and/or sequester carbon. Additional reporting requirements may be requested if your project reduces GHGs or sequesters carbon. Your Grant Coordinator will work with you to get the required information for reporting.

Completion Report

Each LCC must submit a Project Completion Report within 90 days after the project end date to receive the final retention payment of the grant. The purpose of the report is to provide a stand-alone, comprehensive document that captures all pertinent details about the project, including final deliverables, Sponsor verification of the completion of the project, final grant expenditures and all funding sources, and photos. Completion reports may be requested by an oversight agency, the legislature, auditors, and/or the general public.

VI. Appendices

Appendix A: Required Application and Project Administration Forms/Documents

Appendix B: Disadvantaged and Vulnerable Communities

Appendix C: California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Information

Appendix D: Grant Reimbursement & Advance Payments

Appendix E: Acknowledgment Signage

Appendix A: Required Application and Project Administration Forms/Documents

All required forms and documents can be found here: <https://ccc.ca.gov/what-we-do/funding-opportunities/local-conservation-corps/> or by contacting your Grant Coordinator.

*Note that Excel forms are not available on the website – please reach out directly if needed.

Application Forms & Documents:

- FY 22-23 LCC NBS Guidelines
- FY 22-23 LCC NBS Application
- CCC Form 509 – Hourly Rate Justification Form*
- CCC 510 Budget Estimate Form*
- CCC Form 536 – CEQA Compliance Certification Form
- California Environmental Policy Quality Act (CEQA) Notice of Exemption Template

Project Administration Forms & Documents:

- CCC Form 512 – Grant Reimbursement Request Form*
- CCC Form 513 – Grant Change Request Form
- CCC Form 514 – CMD Accomplishments Report
- CCC Form 515 – Grant Completion Report
- CCC Form 518 – Grant Quarterly Report
- CCC Form 529 – Non-Competitive Bid Justification Form
- CCC Form 532 – Grant Advance Request*
- CCC Form 534 – Advance Reconciliation Form*
- Sponsor Verification Letter Template
- Budget Line-Item Tracker*

Appendix B: Disadvantaged and Vulnerable Communities

EO N-82-20 encourages Applicants to develop projects that serve disadvantaged communities (DACs) or vulnerable communities. To determine if the project serves a DAC or vulnerable community, the project itself must serve a DAC or vulnerable community or the project site must be located in and/or immediately adjacent to a DAC or vulnerable community. Corpsmember residency or LCC location cannot be used to qualify the project as serving a DAC or vulnerable community. Below are tools to identify DACs and vulnerable communities.

- **Department of Water Resources' DAC Mapping Tool and State Parks' Community FactFinder:**

These tools define a DAC as a community with a median household income less than 80% of the statewide average. A median household income between \$47,203 to \$62,938 qualifies as a DAC. These numbers are based on the \$78,672 California statewide median household income from the U.S. Census Bureau (Table B19013; American Factfinder Survey 5-year estimates).

To use these tools, go to:

- a) DWR Mapping Tool: <https://gis.water.ca.gov/app/dacs/>
Under the Layer List, check the "Disadvantaged Communities – Census Tracts (ACS: 2016-2020)." An overlay will appear on the map for DAC locations.
- b) State Parks Community FactFinder: <https://www.parksforcalifornia.org/communities>
In the Dialogue Box, check the box for Disadvantaged Community. An overlay will appear on the map for DAC and SDAC and locations.

- **National School Lunch Program**

This tool identifies public schools and the percentage of their students that are eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch Program. If using this tool, the project site must be located within two miles of a public school with at least 75% of their students eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals.

Access the Free or Reduced-Price Meal (Student Poverty) Data here:
<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/ad/filessp.asp>

- **CalEnviroScreen:**

CalEnviroScreen is a mapping tool that helps identify California communities that are most affected by many sources of pollution, and where people are often especially vulnerable to pollution's effects, using environmental, health, and socioeconomic information. CalEnviroScreen scores represent a combined measure of pollution and the potential vulnerability of a population to the effects of pollution.

For the purposes of this program, a CalEnviroScreen DAC is defined by SB 535. To determine if your project qualifies under this category, utilize the CalEnviroScreen 4.0 Mapping Tool here:
<https://oehha.ca.gov/calenviroscreen/sb535>

- **Regional Opportunity Index (ROI)**

The Regional Opportunity Index (ROI) is an index that measures community and regional opportunities available to a community. The goal of the ROI is to help target resources and policies toward people and places with the greatest need, to foster thriving communities of opportunity for all Californians. It does this by incorporating both a "people" component and a "place" component, integrating economic, infrastructure, environmental, and social indicators into a comprehensive assessment of the factors driving opportunity.

To access this tool, go to:

<https://www.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=2c0d50aa6889418db9fb0a6c25564334>

Click on “Open in Scene Viewer” and click on the magnifying glass to the right to enter your project address. For the purposes of this program, a vulnerable community has an ROI of 46.51 – 57.14 (orange zone) or less than 46.51 (red zone).

Appendix C: California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Information Why is CEQA Required?

CEQA is a law that requires state and local agencies to identify the significant environmental impacts of their actions and to avoid or mitigate those impacts, if feasible. CEQA is triggered when a public agency directly undertakes, funds, or approves a “project” as defined by CEQA Statute and Guidelines. All projects funded by this program will trigger CEQA compliance.

Who is responsible for implementing CEQA compliance?

Compliance with, and implementation of, CEQA regulations is the responsibility of the implementing agency for the proposed project, called the Lead Agency. As defined by CEQA Statute §21067, “Lead Agency” means the public agency which has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving a project. The Lead Agency for CEQA must be a State-based public agency as defined by Statute § 21063 and cannot be the federal government, tribal government, or non-profit.

The CCC will review CEQA documentation to ensure it complies with the State law and program policies but does not typically act as Lead Agency for projects carried out by other entities. In limited and special circumstances, the CCC may act as Lead Agency if it is the only public stakeholder involved in the project AND the project meets the definition of a Categorical or Emergency Exemption (see below). If it does not, and if another public stakeholder is not identified, the project will not be approved.

What projects qualify for Categorical Exemptions?

Many projects approved by the CCC qualify for Categorical Exemptions. **Categorical Exemptions do not mean that the project is exempt from CEQA compliance**, but rather that a project falls under a specific type of work that does not require an Initial Study or Environmental Impact Report and therefore substantially reduces the amount of analysis and review required. Projects that fall under a Categorical Exemption must still file a notice to the public, called a Notice of Exemption, stating the project is exempt from full review/analysis. A list of Categorical Exemptions to CEQA can be found at here:

https://www.califaep.org/statute_and_guidelines.php

Some fuel load reduction/wildland fire prevention projects may be eligible for a limited suspension of CEQA requirements. Please see next page for more information and eligibility.

What CEQA documentation is required to submit with the application?

CEQA documentation must be submitted during Phase 2 of the application process and must include the CEQA document filed and the CCC’s CEQA Compliance Certification Form.

1. CEQA document filed must be one of the following:
 - a) A Notice of Exemption filed with and stamped by the County Clerk; OR
 - b) An Initial Study with a Negative Declaration with the response from the State Clearinghouse and a copy of the Notice of Determination filed with and stamped by the County Clerk; OR
 - c) An Initial Study and an Environmental Impact Report with the response from the State Clearinghouse and a copy of the Notice of Determination filed with and stamped by the County Clerk; OR
 - d) A detailed description of the current status of CEQA review and detailed steps the Applicant will take to complete CEQA.

2. CEQA Compliance Certification Form must:

- a) Match the project details in the application, including project title, location, and activities.
- b) Must be signed by the Lead Agency.

Limited Suspension of CEQA Requirements for Eligible Wildland Fire Prevention Activities

Tree Mortality Emergency Proclamation: Regional and Community-Level Fuel Load Reduction Projects

Certain fuel load reduction/tree mortality and tree felling projects may qualify for the limited suspension of the requirements of the CEQA pursuant to the Governor's October 30, 2015, Proclamation of a State of Emergency: https://frap.fire.ca.gov/media/10278/103015_tree_mortality_state_of_emergency_ada.pdf.

The emergency proclamation suspends the requirements of the CEQA and Guidelines for purposes of carrying out, among other things, Directive 2 of the proclamation, where the state agency with primary responsibility for implementing the directive concurs that local action is required. In order to qualify for the emergency proclamation's suspension of the California Environmental Quality Act, the following criteria must be met:

1. The project must be located in a high hazard zone as designated pursuant to Directive 1 of the proclamation.
2. The project must be necessary to protect the public health and safety.
3. The project involves the removal of dead or dying trees that threaten residences, critical community infrastructure, roads, and other evacuation corridors.
4. The work will be conducted in accordance with CAL FIRE's most current draft guidelines for High Hazard Zone Tree Removal.

Wildfire State of Emergency Proclamation: CAL FIRE's 35 Priority Projects

Citing extreme peril posed by wildfire risk, Governor Newsom issued an Emergency Proclamation on January 8, 2019, directing CAL FIRE to immediately implement projects to protect lives and property. To ensure necessary work can get underway immediately, the proclamation suspends certain requirements and regulations as needed to carry out its directives.

CAL FIRE has identified 35 priority projects that can be implemented immediately to help reduce public safety risk for over 200 of California's most wildfire-vulnerable communities. Project examples include removal of hazardous dead trees, vegetation clearing, creation of fuel breaks and community defensible spaces and creation of safer ingress and egress corridors.

The full list of projects can be found here: <https://www.fire.ca.gov/about-us/45-day-report/>. To qualify for this exemption, the Applicant must partner with CAL FIRE to assist with a project on this list.

Applicants wishing to proceed under one of the emergency proclamations must certify that all preceding criteria are met. Applications for projects that are not eligible for the suspension of the requirements of CEQA may be rejected. The Grant Review Team can assist Applicants in determining their eligibility for the proclamation's suspension of CEQA prior to application submission.

PRC 4799.05 – CEQA Exemption on Federal Lands

Projects on federal lands that use prescribed fire, thinning, or fuel reduction to reduce the risk of high-severity wildfire and have been reviewed under NEPA are exempt from CEQA as authorized by Secretary Wade Crowfoot in February 2020, Public Resources Code section 4799.05(d).

These exemptions apply only to CEQA for fuel load reduction/tree mortality and tree felling projects as described above. All other project types must comply with CEQA, and projects on federal land must also comply with the National Environmental Policy Act.

Appendix D: Grant Reimbursement & Advance Payments

Grant Reimbursement Requests (Invoices)

When invoicing for payments, the Grantee must submit the following documentation in the order listed:

1. Cover Letter on Organization Letterhead with:
 - Date
 - Grant Agreement Number
 - Amount
 - Signature of Authorized Representative
2. CCC Form 512 – Grant Reimbursement Request Form
3. Line-Item Expenditures Tracker: Each Grant Reimbursement Request must include a Line-Item Tracker that shows previous balances, current invoice, and remaining balance for each budget category from the Budget Estimate Form. Reconciliation of expenditures between the Line-Item Tracker and accounting records should be performed with every invoice to ensure all financial information is accurate. Your Grant Coordinator can provide a template upon request.
4. Copies of Corpsmember Timesheets, which must include:
 - Corpsmember signature
 - Supervisor signature
 - Project title
 - Project number/code
 - Type of work clearly indicated.

Corpsmember payroll records must include an indication of the Corpsmembers' work location and duties on any given day. Due to the differences in payroll reporting mechanisms, this information can be reported in a number of ways. Please contact your Grant Coordinator for clarification.

5. Documentation Verifying Expenditures (one of the following):
 - Copies of invoices with a zero-balance,
 - Copies of canceled checks (front and back) with invoices for verification,
 - A statement from the vendor (with signature) verifying the payment has been made, or
 - A receipt.
6. Equipment Log (if applicable): Owned equipment may be charged to the grant in accordance with the Grantee's normal accounting practices. Local prevailing rental rates may be used as a guide. If the Grantee's equipment is utilized, a report or source document must:
 - Describe the work performed
 - Indicate the hours/days used
 - Relate the use to the project
 - Be signed by the operator and supervisor
7. Vehicle Log (if applicable): If the vehicle used on the project is owned by the Grantee, a tracking log (hourly/daily use or mileage) is required and must:
 - Describe the arrival and departure locations
 - Indicate the hours/days used with the number of miles driven

- Be signed by the driver and supervisor

When submitting Grant Reimbursement Packets, note the following:

- The packet must be scanned as one document in the order listed above and emailed to your Grant Coordinator (please do not mail).
- The first reimbursement request must be submitted within three months of the initiation of expenditures and **no less than quarterly thereafter**.
- Reimbursement packets cannot be submitted more than once per month.

Advance Payments

Background: A new pilot program for advance payments was established on September 27, 2022, through [Assembly Bill 156 \(AB 156\), SEC 15](#). The program's purpose is to explore possible improvements to the state's existing advance payment practices for state-funded local assistance grants. Per AB 156, this pilot program will remain in effect until July 1, 2025.

Statutory Requirements: AB 156 added Section 11019.1 to the Government Code (GC) governing how advances may be administered, stipulating that administering state agencies shall do all the following:

- Prioritize recipients and projects serving disadvantaged, low-income, and under-resourced communities or organizations with modest reserves and potential cashflow problems.
- Stipulate an advance payment structure and request process within the grant agreement or contract between the administering state agency and the recipient entity.
- Ensure the advance payment to the recipient entity does not to exceed 25 percent of the total grant amount awarded to that recipient entity. An administering state agency may exceed the 25-percent limit if the administering state agency determines that the project requires a larger advance and the recipient entity provides sufficient justification and documentation to the administering state agency.

Documents Required for Advance Payment Request: In accordance with GC 11019.1(c)(2)(A), the items below are required when requesting advance payments:

- A detailed summary and any supporting documentation demonstrating the need for advance payment
- An itemized budget utilizing CCC Form 532 – Grant Advance Request Form
- A spending timeline and workplan for the advanced funds, including explanation of procedures in place to minimize the amount of time that elapses between the transfer of funds and the spend down of those funds
- Documentation of good standing with the Internal Revenue Service

Additional Requirements for Grantee under GC 11019.1:

- Advance payments authorized shall be limited to the minimum immediate cash requirements necessary to carry out the purpose of the approved activity, program, or project.
- The Grantee must establish a separate interest-bearing account with a federally insured bank to deposit all advanced funds. All withdrawals and interest earned must be trackable and reported to the CCC on a quarterly basis. Accumulated interest shall be deemed to be grant moneys and must be used to further the project.
- The Grantee must include in the Quarterly Report, or as requested by the CCC, a progress report on the spend down of advanced funds.
- Utilizing CCC Form 534 – Advance Reconciliation Form, the Grantee must submit a documentation following the expenditure of an advance payment that includes a summary of work completed, proof of expenditure and associated supporting documentation as requested by the CCC.

- Further advance payments shall not be made until a grantee is able to demonstrate that all previously advanced funds have been spent down or a plan is in place to ensure spend down of those funds in a timely manner.
- All unused funding provided as an advance payment but not spent down within the grant timeline shall be returned to the state.
- Note: 11019.1 (c) (2) (B) (i) allows grantees to use funds from the advance payment to subrecipients (subcontractors), however note the following:
 - Grantees shall require all entities they subcontract with to comply with the provisions stated above as they relate to establishing procedures to minimize the amount of time that elapses between the transfer of funds and the spend down of those funds and providing reconciliation documentation.
- Regardless of any transfer or assignment of advanced payments to subrecipients, grantees are liable to the CCC for complying with all provisions specified in GC 11019.1 (c) (2) (B) (i) and for any failures by subrecipients to perform contractual obligations or to comply with the requirements of the referenced section.
- The Department of Finance or its designee may audit, during or after the conclusion of the term of the grant agreement, any state agency, recipient, or subrecipient that received an advanced payment under this section. The state agency, recipient, or subrecipient shall cooperate fully with the audit, including, but not limited to, providing access to its staff, books, records, accounts, or other materials, as requested

Appendix E: Acknowledgment Signage

Acknowledgment signage is optional for NBS-funded projects. Signs eligible for reimbursement must meet the criteria specified below.

State Approval

The Grantee shall submit proposed location(s), size, number of signs, and language for review prior to ordering signs. Failure to receive approval prior to production may result in the loss of funds.

Sign Construction

All materials used shall be durable and resistant to the elements and graffiti. The California Department of Parks and Recreation and California Department of Transportation standards can be used as a guide.

Sign Size

There is no minimum or maximum size required, however, all signs must be large enough to maximize durability and visibility.


Language & Logos

All signs shall contain the following:

- Project title and public-friendly description of project
- Reference to Nature-Based Solutions
- Full name and title of Governor
- Full name and title of Natural Resources Secretary
- Full name of California Conservation Corps and logo (email your Grant Coordinator for artwork)
- Full name of Local Conservation Corps and logo

The sign may also include the names (and/or logos) of other partners, organizations, individuals, and elected representatives.

Sign Example (sample only - exact layout not required)

[Project Title]		
<i>This project was funded by the California Natural Resources Agency's Nature-Based Solutions program to achieve California's climate change goals.</i>		
[INSERT NAME], GOVERNOR		
[Insert Name], Secretary, California Natural Resources Agency		
California Conservation Corps		
[OPTIONAL: Name of Sponsor/Project Partner]		
	Partner Logo	Optional Logo

END OF GUIDELINES