



STRATEGIC LAND CONSERVATION GRANT GUIDELINES



Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program

Funded by Proposition 68
California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal
Protection, and Outdoor Access For All Act of 2018



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The Sierra Nevada Conservancy initiates, encourages, and supports efforts that improve the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region, its communities, and the citizens of California.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Background

The mission of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC) is to initiate, encourage, and support efforts that improve the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region, its communities, and the citizens of California. The SNC's Strategic Plan identifies a goal of conserving strategic lands: to permanently protect high-benefit lands that are threatened with conversion, represent unique natural characteristics, or are critical for resilience to climate change.

The bipartisan [Laird-Leslie Sierra Nevada Conservancy Act](#) (Act), enacted in 2004 and commencing with Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 33300, established the SNC; Sections 33343 and 33346 set forth the authority for SNC to award grants of funds in order to carry out the purposes of the Act.

The statute that created the SNC emphasizes the importance of carrying out the mission in an integrated and complementary manner and the important role an organization providing strategic direction and resources to the Region can play. The SNC's activities fall under seven statutorily mandated program areas:

- 1) Increasing the opportunity for tourism and recreation in the Region
- 2) Protecting, conserving, and restoring the Region's physical, cultural, archaeological, historical, and living resources
- 3) Aiding in the preservation of working landscapes
- 4) Reducing the risk of natural disasters such as wildfire
- 5) Protecting and improving water and air quality
- 6) Assisting the Regional economy through the operation of the SNC's program
- 7) Enhancing public use and enjoyment of lands owned by the public

The [SNC Strategic Plan](#) (Plan) is developed in accordance with the Act and provides direction for SNC activities and the Grant Guidelines (Guidelines). The Plan identifies five Regional Goals:

- 1) Healthy Watersheds and Forests
- 2) Resilient Sierra Nevada Communities
- 3) Vibrant Recreation and Tourism
- 4) Strategic Lands Conserved
- 5) Impactful Regional Identity

The Strategic Lands Conserved goal concentrates on efforts to protect high-risk and/or high-value lands, including agricultural lands, oak woodlands, mixed conifer forests,

wildlife habitat, and wildlife corridors that are threatened by conversion, possess unique natural characteristics, or provide critical resilience to climate change.

The forested watersheds of the Sierra Nevada Region (Region) provide multiple benefits that are critical to protect. More than 60 percent of California's developed water supply flows from the Region, which is the primary source of fresh water flowing into the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. These forests filter water, store snowpack, and slow runoff from winter storms, producing the high-quality and reliable water supply that Californians depend on. Many landscapes in the Sierra Nevada contain unique characteristics that support functional healthy watersheds. Some of these lands are in areas exposed to pressures from multiple sources.

The [Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program \(WIP\)](#) is a coordinated, integrated, collaborative program to restore the health of California's primary watershed through increased investment, needed policy changes, and increased infrastructure. This comprehensive effort is organized and coordinated by the SNC in close partnership with other federal, state, and local agencies, as well as diverse stakeholders, and aims to increase the pace and scale of restoration in the Region. The SNC has established the WIP as the SNC's overarching initiative, providing a holistic approach to SNC's mission, recognizing the inherent interrelationships and dependencies between the Regional Goals.

Related State Priorities

The California Natural Resources Agency's [Safeguarding California Plan: 2018 Update](#) augments and identifies strategies regarding adaptations and risk management relating to climate change. This plan includes strategic acquisition and protection activities as key recommendations to address state climate resiliency goals in multiple policy areas.

The [California Water Action Plan](#) and [2016 California Water Action Plan Update](#), developed by the California Natural Resources Agency, the California Environmental Protection Agency, and the California Department of Food and Agriculture, clearly recognize the importance of the Sierra to the state's water resources. The Water Action Plan calls for the restoration and protection of important ecosystems and improved land and water use alignment. It points to climate change, long-term drought, and catastrophic fires in the Sierra Nevada as fundamental threats to the state's water supply and identifies a critical need to address ecosystem restoration and conservation in the Sierra to protect water resources for California.

The [2018 California Forest Carbon Plan](#) describes recommended actions to achieve healthy and resilient forests as a long-term carbon sink in light of climate change evolution in California. The plan specifically identifies the prevention of forest land conversions through easements and acquisitions as well as land-use planning.

Program Objectives

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy recognizes land conservation as an important tool for achieving holistic watershed health. The Strategic Lands Conserved goal in the Plan focuses on protection of high-risk and/or high-priority lands. These lands provide a range of benefits including working landscapes; recreation opportunities; and protection of unique cultural and natural areas, as well as key wildlife habitat. Additionally, climate change is likely to have impacts yet unseen on the Region and strategically conserving land will become increasingly important as the Region adapts to further changes in the future.

The 2019 Strategic Land Conservation Grant Program is administered as a competitive grant program. The focus of this Program is on land conservation through fee title or easement acquisition projects to protect lands threatened by conversion or lands providing critical resilience to climate change. Acquisitions should aim to protect, restore, or create:

- Unique cultural and/or natural areas
- Working landscapes that provide public resource or economic benefit
- Access to public lands and recreation opportunities

While protecting key fish and wildlife habitat is included in the SNC's Strategic Land Conservation goal, there is significant funding available for such projects through the [Wildlife Conservation Board](#) and California [Department of Fish and Wildlife](#). Habitat protection may be one of the multi-benefits of projects submitted under the SNC program, however if habitat protection is the primary focus of the project it is likely a better fit with one of the agency programs mentioned above or an alternate grant program.

Conservation actions involve the adaptive flexible management or protection of resources in response to changing conditions and threats to habitat, wildlife, or resources. Projects should result in conditions that contribute to the long-term health and resiliency of the watershed.

Please note that individual Requests for Proposals (RFP) may include more specific objectives and project types. The SNC is working closely with other state agencies that provide funding for land conservation to ensure a strategic approach to state investment in the Region. This may result in a focus under this grant program on one or more of the project types described above.

Program Funding

Proposition 68

California voters passed [Proposition 68, the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access For All Act of 2018](#) on June 5, 2018. Proposition 68 added Division 45 to the Public Resources Code, authorizing the state to issue bonds, and

the Legislature to appropriate the proceeds, for purposes identified in the Act. Section 80110(9) in Chapter 8 allocates \$30 million of these funds to the SNC in accordance with SNC's governing statute for its specified purposes. It is the intent of the people of California that these funds will be invested in projects that:

- Advance the purposes of the SNC as identified in its governing statute and Strategic Plan (§80110[9];
- Provide public benefits that address the most critical statewide needs and priorities (§80001[b][1]);
- Leverage private, federal, or local funding or produce the greatest public benefit (§80001[b][2]);
- To the extent practicable, provide workforce training, contractor, and job opportunities for disadvantaged communities (§80001[b][5]); and
- To the extent practicable, measure greenhouse gas emissions reductions and carbon sequestrations associated with projects (§80001[b][7]).

Additionally, Proposition 68 states that

- At least 20 percent of the funds available pursuant to Chapter 8 shall be allocated to projects serving severely disadvantaged communities (SDAC) (§80008[a][1]).

Additional Funding Sources

If additional funding sources become available, with purposes consistent with SNC's Strategic Plan and the Strategic Land Conservation Grant Program as described in these Guidelines, the SNC may direct those funding sources to the support of this grant program.

Project requirements or limitations tied to specific funding sources or state budget allocations will be reflected in specific RFPs.

Grant Guidelines and Proposals

The Grant Guidelines describe project eligibility and the process used by the SNC to solicit proposals, evaluate applications, and authorize grants under the Strategic Land Conservation Grant Program.

The SNC requires that Pre-Applications and Applications be submitted via an online process. The online proposal and associated materials and forms will be made available for public use following the release of an RFP. Applicants should read and be familiar with the Grant Guidelines and have a copy of the Guidelines available as a reference when completing the online proposal. The SNC strongly recommends that applicants consult with [SNC Subregional Representatives](#) early in the development of a project.

II. PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

Applicant Eligibility

Grant funds may be authorized for:

- Public agencies: Any city, county, special district, joint powers authority, state agency, or federal agency.
- Qualifying 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations: "Nonprofit Organization" means a private, nonprofit organization that qualifies for exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of Title 26 of the United States Code, and whose charitable purposes are consistent with the purposes of the SNC.
- Eligible Tribal Entities: An Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, or a tribal agency authorized by a tribe, which is one or both of the following: (1) Recognized by the United States and identified within the most current Federal Register; (2) Listed on the contact list maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission as a California Native American tribe.

NOTE: The SNC's governing statute does not allow grants to mutual water companies.

Project Eligibility

The SNC may make grants to eligible partners to acquire an interest in real property, fee interest or less than fee interest, from willing sellers only. Although the SNC is prohibited by statute (PRC 33347) from purchasing real property outright, it can fund fee title acquisition by other eligible entities.

To be eligible to receive a grant award from the SNC under this program, projects must meet all the following criteria:

- Be located within the Sierra Nevada Region
- Be consistent with the SNC mission and program areas as defined in the [SNC Strategic Plan](#) and the [Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program \(WIP\)](#).
- Meet requirements of [Proposition 68](#)
- Result in a clear, demonstrable, and enduring public benefit
- Engage willing sellers only
- Be consistent with applicable city or county General Plan

Consistent with provisions of Proposition 68 and objectives of the proposed project, the SNC will give favorable consideration to:

- Projects that consider public access to lands conserved.
- Projects that preserve working landscapes.
- Projects that will provide future opportunities for active management and restoration to enhance multiple benefits and increase climate adaptation.

- Projects with funding from other sources to support long-term stewardship obligations. (This grant program does not provide grants for long-term management of conserved lands.)
- Projects that consider overall impacts on local tax revenue and include mechanisms to minimize potential decreases in revenue.

Language concerning project eligibility, as well as any determinations of eligible costs, are subject to applicable conditions and limitations of a specific funding source, or which may be later set forth in the State Budget Act or other official guidance.

Please contact [SNC Subregional Representatives](#) to determine project eligibility or to identify alternative funding opportunities and other assistance.

Grant Categories

Grants may be awarded for Category One land conservation projects as well as Category Two planning projects for activities that will lead directly to a specific future land conservation project that meets eligibility requirements of the Guidelines. The project types may not be combined; Category Two planning activities may not be included in a Category One grant application. Individual grant amount limits will be identified in subsequent RFPs.

Category One Projects

Category One grants should include expenses associated directly with a real property acquisition transaction. Acquisition transactions may include fee title, access easements for public use or to access public lands, or conservation easements. Category One grant deliverables should include a completed acquisition.

Examples of potential Category One land conservation projects include but are not limited to:

- Fee title or conservation easement acquisitions to protect agricultural land from detrimental land use changes.
- Fee title or easement acquisitions which facilitate access to public lands.
- Fee title or easement acquisitions of forested property to protect watersheds or manage for greenhouse gas emission reductions.
- Fee title or easement acquisitions to protect areas of cultural importance to Native Americans.
- Fee title or easement acquisitions of upper watershed lands to protect and improve water supply and water quality, improve forest health, or reduce wildfire impacts.

Category Two Projects

Category Two grants are limited to pre-project activities necessary for a specific future land conservation acquisition. Activities include the required due-diligence to complete a specific land conservation acquisition as described under Category One Projects. The property or rights to be acquired must be identified, and a letter of intent from the willing seller must be presented. Category Two applications must demonstrate the feasibility and likelihood that the planning phase will lead to a completed future acquisition.

Examples of Category Two grant activities include, but are not limited to:

- Completion of a property or easement fair market value appraisal and/or appraisal review.
- Completion of preliminary title report reviews, boundary surveys, environmental site assessments, mineral title reports, etc., that may be required to secure funding for an easement or fee title acquisition of rights or property for purposes that are consistent with objectives identified in these Guidelines and any additional restrictions included in the grant RFP.
- Analysis required to support complete California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documentation for a specific acquisition. Lead agencies need to be identified and demonstrate a willingness to complete adoption of CEQA.
- Performance of necessary baseline studies, cultural resources, biological, botanical, aquatic, soil, hydrologic, wildlife, timber, or other studies/surveys.
- Preparation of habitat conservation plans or other management plans for a specific property or easement acquisition.

Ineligible Projects

Examples of ineligible projects include:

- Grants to service or repay loans
- Projects dictated by a legal settlement or mandated to address a violation of, or an order (citation) to comply with, a law or regulation
- Projects for negotiations only
- Operations and maintenance of existing structures, including roads
- Research, education, outreach, or event-related projects, although these types of activities may be included as a small part of the overall implementation of a project eligible for SNC grant funds

This list is not exhaustive and is offered only as guidance to potential applicants. The SNC will make determinations of eligibility on a project-by-project basis. If an applicant has questions about the eligibility of their project, they should consult with their [SNC Subregional Representatives](#).

Eligible Costs

DIRECT PROJECT COSTS

For project costs to be eligible for reimbursement, the costs must be within the scope of the project, supported by appropriate documentation, and completed by the required deadline as identified in the grant agreement. Costs related to project-specific performance measures, project reporting, and required signage are eligible costs, and, if being requested by the applicant, must be included in the project budget. For Category One grants, escrow and other appurtenant costs of closing are eligible. For both Categories, legal costs associated with specific workplan activities necessary for the transaction are eligible.

ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS

Administrative costs are shared overhead expenses rather than direct costs. For Category Two grants, administrative costs may not exceed 15 percent of the SNC-funded direct project costs. For Category One grants, administrative costs are limited to actual pro-rated overhead costs, not to exceed \$10,000. In the event of an audit, projects with budgets that include administrative costs must be able to document the appropriateness of these expenses. A typical method for documentation of administrative overhead expenses is a Cost Allocation Plan (CAP). A CAP is a formal accounting plan used to calculate and document the method for recovering overhead costs. The SNC strongly recommends that grantees consult with an accounting professional to develop an appropriate method for calculating overhead rate and prepare a CAP.

Ineligible Costs

Examples of ineligible costs include, but are not limited to:

- Establishing or increasing a legal defense fund or endowment
- Monetary donations to other organizations
- Food or refreshments
- Costs associated with fundraising
- Grant writing expenses
- Any expenses incurred before a grant agreement is executed or after the project completion deadline, as identified in the grant agreement

NOTE: If a proposal contains ineligible costs, SNC will consult with the applicant to confirm viability of project if those costs are removed from the budget in advance of consideration by the SNC Board.

III. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Proposal Requirements

A grant application to acquire an interest in real property shall specify all the following:

1. The intended use of the property
2. The manner in which the land will be managed
3. How the cost of ongoing management will be funded
4. Disclosure of known plans to transfer ownership of the property after acquisition

In the case of a grant to acquire an interest in real property, including but not limited to a fee interest, the agreement between the SNC and the recipient shall require all of the following:

1. The purchase price of an interest in real property acquired shall not exceed fair market value as established by an appraisal reviewed and approved by the California Department of General Services (DGS) and SNC.
2. The easement conditions and/or terms of sale for the easement or property acquisition under the grant shall be subject to SNC's approval.
3. An interest in real property to be acquired under the grant shall not be used as security for a debt unless the lien is subordinate to the easement acquired or SNC approves the transaction.

A deed or instrument by which the grantee acquires an interest in real property under the grant shall include a power of termination on the part of the SNC. The deed or instrument shall provide that the SNC may exercise the power of termination by notice in the event of the grantee's violation of the purpose of the grant through breach of a material term of condition thereof, and that, upon recordation of the notice, full title to the interest in real property identified in the notice shall immediately vest in the SNC or in another public agency or a nonprofit or tribal organization designated by the SNC to which the SNC conveys or has conveyed its interest.

Right of Access Requirements

Applicants must submit a letter from all property owners/managers indicating their awareness of and willingness to implement the project being planned. Applicants must obtain written permission from the land owner to access property to conduct pre-project due diligence or other necessary activities.

For projects involving multiple landowners, all landowners, or authorized designees, must provide satisfactory proof of land tenure.

Environmental Documents

The SNC requires all proposals to comply with CEQA at the time the Board authorizes a grant. Property and easement acquisitions for conservation purposes are generally

exempt from CEQA. If a project involves activities that require CEQA analysis, applicants must consult with SNC staff as early as possible to discuss which documents may be required. In cases where a project proponent does not have standing to act as Lead Agency, the SNC will consider acting as Lead Agency.

NOTE: When projects have previously completed CEQA documentation and the baseline environmental conditions of the project area have significantly changed (due to fire, tree mortality, etc.), applicants must provide confirmation from the lead agency responsible for preparing the original CEQA documents that the documents remain valid.

Long-term Management and Monitoring

The Category One project site shall be maintained, operated, and used in a manner consistent with the purposes of the project. Additionally, the grantee and/or property owner shall not use any portion of the project site for mitigation or as security for any debt. The grantee shall develop a long-term Management and Monitoring Plan appropriate to the property and/or easement and consistent with state regulations. The Plan must include a description of how the project area will be managed/maintained over time, a process and schedule for monitoring site conditions, by whom, and how funding will be provided for such work. SNC does not provide a specific template for the plans, allowing grantees to use plans that may be developed based on other funding requirements.

SNC and Related Monitoring

Category One projects shall be subject to monitoring for general site conditions. SNC and its officers, employees, agents, and representatives shall have access to monitor the project site for a minimum of twenty-five (25) years following completion of the project. This requirement will be addressed through the grant agreement with the grantee; SNC will not enter into a separate agreement with private landowners. SNC will coordinate with the grantee whenever possible when requesting access.

The California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) will lead landscape-scale quantification of greenhouse gas emissions reductions and carbon sequestration for all projects funded under Proposition 68, where feasible. Grantees will not be required to make these calculations for each project, but instead submit base information (such as acres, land type, activities) for CNRA use.

While not required by SNC, if the project includes water-quality monitoring data collection, the data should be reported to the [State Water Resources Control Board](#) (SWRCB) in a manner that is compatible and consistent with surface monitoring data systems or ground water monitoring data systems administered by the SWRCB.

While not required by SNC, if the project includes watershed monitoring data collection, the data should be reported to the [Department of Conservation](#) (DOC) in a manner that is compatible and consistent with the statewide watershed program administered by the DOC.

Performance Measures and Reporting

Performance measures are used to track progress toward project goals and desired outcomes. They provide a means of reliably measuring and reporting the outcomes and effectiveness of a project and how it contributes to the SNC achieving its programmatic goals. Applicants must propose project-specific performance measures at the time of proposal submission. Detailed information and recommended performance measures can be found on [SNC Performance Measures](#).

- The SNC requires all grantees to consider four specific quantitative performance measures:
 1. Number and Type of Jobs Created
 2. Number and Value of New, Improved, or Preserved Economic Activities
 3. Resources Leveraged for the Sierra Nevada
 4. Acres of Land Conserved
- In addition, each grantee will be required to report on one to three additional project-specific performance measures that will help describe project outcomes in a measurable way. Examples of additional performance measures can be found on [SNC Performance Measures](#).
- Applicants may also propose alternative performance measures, which will be subject to the approval of SNC staff if the grant is authorized. The proposed measures will be finalized in consultation with SNC staff prior to grant agreement approval.
- All grantees will be required to provide six-month progress reports and a final report for the entire project timeline. The final report must include data associated with the project performance measures.

Consultation and Cooperation with Local Agencies

In compliance with the SNC's governing statute, local government agencies, such as counties, cities, and local water districts, are notified of eligible grant projects being considered for funding in their area. Applicants are required to submit contact information for these local agencies/districts.

For all proposals under consideration, SNC staff will notify the county and/or city affected and public water agency (when appropriate), and request comments within 15 business days following notification. The SNC will make all reasonable efforts to address concerns raised by local governments. The SNC Boardmembers representing each geographic Subregion within the SNC boundary will also be notified of project proposals in their respective Subregions.

If there are any privacy concerns related to information contained in a proposal, please notify SNC staff before submission.

Tribal Consultation

On September 19, 2011, Governor Brown issued [Executive Order B-10-11](#), which provides, among other things, that it is the policy of the administration that every state agency and department subject to executive control implement effective government-to-government consultation with California Native American tribes. SNC staff will work to implement all aspects of the Tribal Consultation Policy when evaluating project proposals. The SNC strongly encourages Native American involvement in projects. The SNC can assist applicants with identifying Native American tribes whose ancestral homelands may be in the project area, and contact information for those tribes. Upon receipt of grant applications, SNC will notify appropriate tribal representatives of projects proposed in ancestral homelands.

IV. GRANT PROCESS

Project Development

Following SNC Board and CNRA approval of the Grant Guidelines, SNC will solicit grant applications with the release of a Request for Proposals (RFP). The RFP will provide detailed information as to the RFP schedule, application instructions, individual grant award limits and funding sources, program priorities, evaluation criteria, and additional requirements and information relevant to that round. RFPs will be made available on the SNC Website one or more times a year, and SNC will undertake a thorough outreach effort to announce the RFP to diverse populations.

The SNC strongly encourages partners to contact the [SNC Subregional Representative](#) assigned to their county to determine whether a potential project is eligible for consideration and for assistance in project development.

Project Proposals

The SNC proposal process involves a Pre-Application and Application phase. Pre-Applications are mandatory. If a complete Pre-Application is not received by the specified deadline, the applicant will not be eligible to submit a full Application. Pre-Applications and Applications must be submitted through the SNC online application system.

A mandatory site visit will be conducted for every eligible Category One Pre-Application. The purpose of the site visit is to provide the applicant an opportunity to clarify any questions that may assist with application development. Applicants are encouraged to invite tribal representatives who have been contacted through outreach efforts to participate in this site visit.

A grant proposal for funds to acquire an interest in real property is required to specify all the following:

- The intended use of the property
- A description of how the acquisition will directly result in a clear, demonstrable, and enduring public benefit
- The manner in which the land will be managed
- Considerations to reduce potential impacts on local property tax revenue
- How the cost of ongoing management will be funded
- Expected timeline through completed acquisition
- An appraisal completed within the past 12 months – If the appraisal is older than one year, the applicant must consult with SNC staff prior to submission
- A Phase I or Phase II Environmental Site Assessment (toxics report) if necessary – The SNC may require applicants to provide such documents on any property

proposed for acquisition. Applicants should consult with SNC staff to determine if this requirement is applicable.

- The status of technical documents or other agreements – Category One proposals that have completed all applicable planning (appraisals; CEQA; necessary resolutions; agreed-upon terms of the sale, option to purchase, or easements; Phase I/II Environmental Assessments; etc.) will be scored higher.
- How CEQA compliance has been or will be achieved – If not exempt and CEQA is not yet complete, the Lead Agency for CEQA must be identified in the full application with a letter of support or other documentation from the Agency stating that they are eligible and willing to serve as Lead. In cases where a project proponent does not have standing to act as Lead Agency, the SNC will consider acting as Lead Agency. The SNC requires that all proposals comply with CEQA at the time the Board authorizes any grants.
- Evidence of contact and communication with representatives from tribes whose ancestral homelands may be affected by the project – Documentation of the outreach and the outcomes of any resultant discussion must be included in the application. The SNC Subregional Representatives can assist with identifying appropriate tribal representatives. The SNC strongly encourages tribal participation in both planning and implementation projects.

V. EVALUATION PROCESS AND CRITERIA

Evaluation Process

All grant applications will be reviewed for completeness and eligibility following submission. Any application determined to be incomplete and/or ineligible may not be considered for funding.

After a submitted application is determined to be complete and eligible, the SNC will initiate the following evaluation process:

- 1) Applications will be reviewed for eligibility and completeness.
- 2) Applications will be reviewed by a technical expert for technical merit.
- 3) Applications will be reviewed by an environmental compliance expert.
- 4) Appraisals will be submitted to the California Department of General Services for review.
- 5) Applications will be shared with appropriate county/city planning, water agency (if applicable), and tribal representatives, as well as SNC's Boardmember county liaisons. If there are any privacy concerns related to information in an application, please discuss them with SNC staff before submission.
- 6) The Evaluation Team will score the applications based on the evaluation criteria described in the following sections.
- 7) Applications scoring 80 or more points may be eligible for a recommendation for award.
- 8) After the evaluation process is complete, including all due diligence and analysis by the SNC, funding recommendation(s) will be placed on a future Board meeting agenda at the discretion of SNC's Executive Officer.

NOTE: The SNC will consider the geographic distribution of projects, project locations related to disadvantaged communities, and project types and may prioritize projects based on these considerations.

Evaluation Criteria

Specific criteria and scoring weight will be included in Request for Proposals and may vary by RFP. Applicants must refer to the RFP and online application for detailed guidance on applying the evaluation criteria in the application narrative. Category One and Two projects will be scored on variations of these criteria.

1. Alignment with funding and program goals and related state priorities

The degree to which a project aligns with:

- The [SNC Strategic Plan](#)
- [Proposition 68](#) or other funding source

- State Planning Priorities previously addressed in these Guidelines, including the [California Water Action Plan](#), [Safeguarding California](#), the [California Forest Carbon Plan](#), and whether and how the project will benefit disadvantaged communities
- Other local, Regional, state, or federal plans

2. Public / Natural Resource Benefits

The degree to which the project provides multiple tangible, enduring, public benefits and the proposal provides sufficient analysis and documentation to demonstrate significance and a high likelihood that the benefits will be realized – Is the need for the specific project, including the threats to public resources, clearly identified and explained? Are the expected natural resource benefits explained and reasonable?

3. Project Readiness

The degree to which the project is ready to proceed promptly if funded – Is project planning and coordination complete? Is access secured? Is environmental compliance, permitting, or other necessary preparations complete as appropriate for a Category One or Two project? Is all funding identified or secured?

4. Project Design

Description of the project purpose, goals, deliverables, and schedule – Is the project approach well designed and appropriate for meeting the objectives and deliverables of the project? Will a proposed Category Two project prepare all needed planning elements for the future acquisition? The approach should be adequately described to assure methods and technologies are appropriate and understood.

5. Project Budget

The degree to which the proposed budget is adequate and reasonable to implement the project – Are proposal costs clearly articulated, sufficiently supported, and are reasonable levels of fees for service supported?

6. Long-Term Management

Is a long-term management plan which includes identification of funding and responsible entity in place? How will the natural resource protection and public values be sustained?

7. Likelihood of Success

Does the applicant have the necessary experience, sufficient capacity, and a successful track record implementing similar projects?

8. Community Support and Collaboration

The degree to which the project has public and institutional support at the local, Regional, or larger scale and the local community or other stakeholders are engaged in project planning or delivery – Was the project developed as part of collaborative efforts? Is there clear and demonstrable community outreach and

support for the project and any community economic benefits? Is there evidence of tribal support and potential tribal participation in the project?

9. Landscape-Level Context

The degree to which the proposed project is part of a larger plan, coordinated cumulative effort, promotes landscape connectivity, or is proximate to other projects with similar goals, protected lands, or recreational amenities – Is the project part of a larger plan? Does the project support a broader, cumulative effort to restore/protect strategic conservation goals? Has an effort been made to engage other landowners in the area?

10. Leveraging

The degree to which a project provides in-kind services and/or secured federal, state, private, or local cost share funding – Have non-monetary and/or funding resources of agencies and organizations other than the SNC been identified and secured?

Grant Awards and Agreements

For each awarded grant, the SNC develops an individual grant agreement with detailed provisions and requirements specific to that project. Please be aware that if an entity is awarded a grant from the SNC, the provisions listed below will also apply.

- For Category One grants, administrative costs are limited to actual pro-rated overhead costs, not to exceed \$10,000.
- For Category Two grants, administrative costs are limited to no more than 15 percent of the actual direct project costs.
- Grant-eligible costs may be incurred by the grantee only after the grantee has entered into a fully executed agreement with the SNC.
- To the extent practicable, Category One projects will be required to include onsite signage indicating that the project was funded by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and the applicable funding source. The required acknowledgement language is included in the grant agreement and logo graphics are available on the SNC Website. Reasonable costs associated with creation and installation of the sign are eligible expenses and should be included in the project budget.

The SNC will provide assistance to the grantee to ensure the grantee's clear understanding and interpretation of the terms and conditions of the grant.

For applicants interested in more information about the standard grant agreement clauses and administrative requirements once a grant is authorized, sample grant agreements are available at: <http://www.sierranevada.ca.gov/other-assistance/applying-for-a-grant>.

NOTE: Grant funds are awarded through a public competitive grant process, governed by guidelines that have been through a public review and state approval process. As such, application and award terms must remain equivalent for all participants in the program.

VI. ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Act	Laird-Leslie Sierra Nevada Conservancy Act
CAL FIRE	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
CALCC	California Association of Local Conservation Corps
CAP	Cost Allocation Plan
CCC	California Conservation Corps
CDFW	California Department of Fish and Wildlife
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CWAP	California Water Action Plan
CWC	California Water Code
DGS	Department of General Services
DOC	Department of Conservation
DWR	Department of Water Resources
GG	Grant Guidelines
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
HRTW	Human Right to Water
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
Plan	Sierra Nevada Conservancy Strategic Plan
PRC	Public Resources Code
RFP	Request for Proposals
RPF	Registered Professional Forester
SDAC	Severely Disadvantaged Community
SNC	Sierra Nevada Conservancy
SWRCB	State Water Resources Control Board
USFS	United States Forest Service
WIP	Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program

VII. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Unless otherwise stated, the terms used in these Grant Guidelines shall have the following meanings:

Acquisition – To obtain fee title ownership of real property. Leaseholds and rentals do not constitute acquisition.

Administrative Costs – Administrative costs include any expense which is not directly related to project implementation. Similar to the traditional definition of ‘overhead,’ administrative costs include shared costs such as rent, utilities, travel, per diem, office equipment, services such as internet and phone, shared bookkeeping costs, etc.

Applicant – The entity applying for an SNC grant pursuant to these Guidelines.

Application – The individual grant application form and its required attachments pursuant to the SNC Grant Program.

Authorized Representative – The officer authorized in the Resolution to sign all required grant documents including, but not limited to, the grant agreement, the application form, and payment requests.

Biological/Other Survey – An evaluation or collection of data regarding the conditions in an area using surveys and other direct measurements.

Board – The governing body of the SNC as established by PRC Section 33321.

Bond or Bond Act – Proposition 1, Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 (PRC Section 79700 et seq.).

Capital Improvement Projects – Projects that utilize grant funds for site improvement and/or restoration.

CEQA – The California Environmental Quality Act as set forth in the PRC Section 21000 et seq. CEQA is a law establishing policies and procedures that require agencies to identify, disclose to decision makers and the public, and attempt to lessen significant impacts to environmental and historical resources that may occur as a result of a proposed project to be undertaken, funded, or approved by a local or state agency. For more information: <http://www.resources.ca.gov/ceqa/>.

CEQA/NEPA Compliance – Activities an entity performs to meet the requirements of CEQA and/or NEPA.

Collaborative Process – Cooperation between stakeholders with different interests to solve a problem or make decisions that cut across jurisdictional or other boundaries; often used when information is widely dispersed and no single individual, agency, or group has sufficient resources to address the issue alone.

Condition Assessment – Characterization of the current state or condition of a particular resource.

Conservancy – The Sierra Nevada Conservancy as defined in PRC Section 33302 (b).

Data – A body or collection of facts, statistics, or other items of information from which conclusions can be drawn.

Design – Preliminary project planning or identification of methodologies or processes to achieve project goals.

Eligible Costs – Expenses incurred by the grantee during the performance period of an approved agreement which may be reimbursed by the SNC.

Enhancement – Modification of a site to increase/improve the condition of streams, forests, habitat, and other resources.

Environmental Site Assessment – Phase I, Phase II, or other reports which identify potential or existing contamination liabilities on the underlying land or physical improvements of a real estate holding.

Executive Officer – Executive Officer of the SNC appointed by the Governing Board, pursuant to PRC Section 33328, to manage the SNC.

Fee Title – The primary interest in land ownership that entitles the owner to use the property subject to any lesser interests in the land and consistent with applicable laws and ordinances.

Fiscal Sponsor – An organization that is eligible to receive SNC Proposition 68 grants and is willing to assume fiscal responsibility for a grant project, although another entity would carry out the grant scope of work.

Forests – For the purposes of these Guidelines, forests are defined as areas of the Sierra Nevada Region that are characterized by predominantly conifer and mixed-conifer forests.

Forest Health – A healthy forest is a forest that possesses the ability to sustain the unique species composition and processes that exist within it. Forest Health occurs when resilience, recurrence, persistence, and biophysical processes lead to sustainable ecological conditions.

Grant – Funds made available to a grantee for eligible costs during an agreement term.

Grant Agreement – An agreement between the SNC and the grantee specifying the payment of funds by the SNC for the performance of the project scope according to the terms of the agreement by the grantee.

Grantee – An entity that has an agreement with the SNC for grant funds.

Grant Scope – Description of the items of work to be completed with grant funds as described in the application form and cost estimate.

In-kind Contributions – Non-monetary donations that are utilized on the project, including materials and services. These donations shall be eligible as “other sources of funds” when providing budgetary information for application purposes.

Land Tenure – Legal ownership or other rights in land, sufficient to allow a grantee to conduct activities that are necessary for completion of the project consistent with the terms and conditions of the grant agreement. Examples include fee title ownership, an easement for completion of the project consistent with the terms and conditions of the grant agreement, or agreements or a clearly defined process where the applicant has adequate site control for the purposes of the project.

Model/Map – Representations to visually show the organization, appearance, or features of an area or subject.

Multibenefit – For the purposes of these Guidelines, the term ‘Multibenefit’ when pertaining to Forest Health may include but is not limited to: reduction in wildfire risk, improved air quality, improved water quality and quantity, increased carbon sequestration, and biomass utilization. Multibenefits pertaining to the SNC mission and program areas, the SNC Strategic Plan, and WIP may include, but are not limited to, increased economic resilience, increased or enhanced use of public lands, and increased or enhanced recreational benefits

NEPA – The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended. NEPA is a federal law requiring consideration of the potential environmental effects of a proposed project whenever a federal agency has discretionary jurisdiction over some aspect of that project. For more information: <https://ceq.doe.gov/>.

Nonprofit Organization – A private, nonprofit organization that qualifies for exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of Title 26 of the United States Code, and whose charitable purposes are consistent with the purposes of the SNC as set forth in PRC Section 33300 et seq.

Other Sources of Funds – Cash or in-kind contributions necessary or used to complete the site improvement/restoration project beyond the grant funds provided by this program.

Outreach Materials – Audio, visual, and written materials developed to help explain a topic or subject.

Performance Measure – A quantitative measure used by the SNC to track progress toward project goals and desired outcomes.

Permitting – The process of obtaining any necessary regulatory approvals from appropriate governmental agencies to implement the project.

Plan – A document or process describing a set of actions to address specific needs or issues, or to create specific benefits.

Pre-Project Due Diligence – The analysis necessary to prepare a future on-the-ground project for implementation.

Preservation – Protection, rehabilitation, stabilization, restoration, development, and reconstruction, or any combination of those activities.

Project – The work to be accomplished with grant funds.

Proposition 1 – The Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Bond Act of 2014. Proposition 1 added Section 79731 to the California Water Code (CWC), authorizing the state to issue bonds, and the Legislature to appropriate the proceeds, for multibenefit water quality, water supply, and watershed protection and restoration projects for the watersheds of the state.

Proposition 68 – The California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access For All Act of 2018 which authorizes the issuance of bonds to finance a drought, water, parks, climate, coastal protection, and outdoor access for all program.

Public Agencies – Any city, county, district, joint powers authority, or state agency.

Region – The Sierra Nevada Region as defined in PRC Section 33302 (f).

Resilience – The ability of an ecosystem to regain structural and functional attributes that have suffered harm from stress or disturbance.

Region-wide – The overall breadth of the SNC Region or multiple Subregions within the Region.

Resource Protection – Those actions necessary to prevent harm or damage to natural, cultural, historical, or archaeological resources, or those actions necessary to allow the continued use and enjoyment of property or resources, such as restoration, preservation, or interpretation.

Restoration – Activities that initiate, accelerate, or return the components and processes of a damaged site to a previous historical state.

Severely Disadvantaged Community (SDAC) – A community with a median household income less than 60 percent of the statewide average. To view maps of SDAC areas, visit <http://www.parksforcalifornia.org/communities>.

Site Improvements – Project activities involving the physical improvement or restoration of land.

SNC – Sierra Nevada Conservancy.

Study/Report – Research or the detailed examination and analysis of a subject.

Total Cost – The amount of the Other Sources of Funds combined with the SNC Grant request amount that is designated and necessary for the completion of a project

Tribal Entities – Includes any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, or a tribal agency authorized by a tribe which is one or both of the following: (1) Recognized by the United States and identified within the most current Federal Register; (2) Listed on the contact list maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission as a California Native American tribe.