



STEWARDSHIP ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SAP) OVERVIEW FY2023-24

MALT’s mission is to permanently protect Marin’s agricultural land for agricultural use. The Stewardship Assistance Program (SAP) provides grants to farmers and ranchers to plan, design and implement conservation practices that increase agricultural productivity, improve soil and water quality, and build ecological health in concert with a partner organization, the Marin Resource Conservation District (MRCD). Agriculture offers many benefits to the greater community, including local jobs and capital, as well as locally produced food, fiber, and other agricultural products. Protection of agriculturally productive land also helps to maintain open space, scenic views, wildlife corridors, and greenbelts. Responsibly managed agricultural lands protect aquatic ecosystems and groundwater basins, sequester carbon, and provide habitat for native plants and wildlife. SAP projects contribute to these numerous public benefits through the support of ecologically beneficial and sustainable agriculture.

ELIGIBILITY

SAP grant applicants must meet ALL of the following eligibility requirements:

1. The proposed project will advance MALT’s mission, protect conservation values of the land, and provide public benefit.
2. The owner of the land has signed the SAP application.
3. The project is on land that is permanently protected with a MALT easement in good standing, and is being actively farmed or ranched to produce food or fiber for the greater community.
4. SAP grant funding is available to new projects that have not been started prior to execution of the grant agreement.
5. Agricultural producers may apply for one SAP grant per fiscal year; however, MALT will consider multiple applications for the same property submitted by different agricultural operators on the land (i.e. a landowner and lessee).
6. No project may receive more than \$50,000 total – regardless of the number of years for project completion.
7. Applications received from “Interested Parties”, as defined in MALT’s Conflict of Interest Policy, agree to the MRCD’s policies and to have MRCD approve and administer any SAP applications.
8. Approved SAP grant applicants must allow MALT and the MRCD to photograph any completed projects, develop narratives around the SAP project with landowner approval, and permit MALT and the MRCD to use such photographs and project narratives for fundraising and publicity purposes.
9. Due to high demand and a limited funding pool, MALT asks that any applicant who can otherwise readily afford their selected project consider other grant programs for project funding.

BUDGET & PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

Each fiscal year MALT allocates funding to increase the stewardship of MALT-protected lands in partnership with the MRCD. These funds are procured through generous donations and used to help offset

landowner cost share on conservation practices. SAP is administered through a three-track system: 1) MALT-Administered Projects; 2) Multi-Agency/Matching Commitment Projects; and 3) Interested Party Grants. Upon MALT's review of each application, one of the aforementioned tracks will be selected.

SAP funding may reimburse up to 85% of the landowner's cost share, with a cap of \$20,000 for Track 1 projects and a cap of \$50,000 for Track 2 projects. Track 3 projects may have either funding cap depending on the criteria of the project. Throughout the fiscal year, MALT directly reimburses landowners for Track 1 & 2 projects, and will distribute funds on a project-by-project basis to the MRCD to provide funding for Track 3 projects.

TRACK 1: MALT-ADMINISTERED PROJECTS

Track 1 projects support landowners and lessees with and on existing MALT easements. The projects can include the planning, design, and implementation of conservation practices that increase ecological or agricultural resilience. These projects often do not trigger permitting requirements or other environmental compliance issues and usually only take a few months to complete, from approval to grant payment. A few examples are installing water troughs, riparian fencing, invasive species management, or soil amendments. The applicant must submit an estimated project cost with quotes or bids for the proposed project. These projects are evaluated with selection criteria and then approved by the SAP Review Committee and administered by MALT staff. MALT will fund up to 85% of the total project cost with a \$20,000 funding cap. Grant payment will be processed upon project completion and reimbursed via check.

TRACK 2: MULTI-AGENCY / MATCHING COMMITMENT PROJECTS

MALT may provide a portion of the landowner cost-share for grants awarded by other agencies, including but not limited to, the MRCD, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the California Department of Food and Agriculture, and the California State Coastal Conservancy. These are often complex, larger, and innovative projects with many partners designed to address large natural resource concerns which may also involve environmental reviews and permitting. These projects often take many months to complete, from approval to grant payment. MALT commits SAP grant funding and staff time as matching commitment for grants submitted by the MRCD and other agencies. MALT may fund up to 85% of the landowner cost share for Agency projects, with a funding cap of \$50,000. Applicants will work directly with the lead Agency on planning, designing, and budgeting the project. If an applicant is enrolled in an NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) project, the applicant is eligible for up to \$50,000 for the entirety of the contract. If the applicant is enrolled in another program and there are several projects nested within one contract, MALT reserves the right to determine which projects the SAP grant will be applied to. Under special circumstances, MALT may contribute a portion of funding to completed phases of work if the project lasts more than a year. For large-scale projects, MALT reserves the right to limit the SAP contribution to climate beneficial practices that directly impact soil and water quality.

TRACK 3: INTERESTED PARTY GRANTS

MALT board members and other "interested parties," as defined in MALT's [Conflict of Interest Policy](#), may apply for SAP grants. MALT encourages all landowners to be good land stewards and values equity and fairness in the distribution of SAP funding. MALT also understands that MALT interested parties may be perceived as having an unfair advantage in accessing funding. Under these circumstances, MALT will engage with the MRCD, a public agency that is required to be transparent to the public by holding public meetings and disclosing project information, to evaluate, administer, approve, and manage projects.