

## **Small Grants Program Guidelines**

### **Marin Agricultural Land Trust**

Marin Agricultural Land Trust (MALT) is a nonprofit land trust created in 1980 by a coalition of ranchers and environmentalists to permanently protect Marin County farmland. Some of the Bay Area's most highly acclaimed dairy and cheese products, grass-fed meats, and organic crops are produced on farmland protected by MALT. MALT has permanently protected over 57,000 acres of West Marin's diverse mosaic of coastal grasslands, oak woodlands, rangelands, and pastoral open space through 97 agricultural conservation easements.

### **Small Grants Program Overview**

MALT's small grants program, which has awarded \$400,000 to date, builds on the success of distributing over \$2 million through our Stewardship Assistance Program and Drought Resilience and Water Security initiative to farmers and ranchers throughout Marin County to enhance best management practices and stewardship for natural and working lands. We are excited to launch new rounds of small grants that will help build towards MALT's vision of a thriving and inclusive agricultural community in a healthy and diverse natural environment.

MALT's small grants program funds projects that preserve agriculture, protect biodiversity, connect our community, and build climate resilience. The small grants program values social justice, prioritizes agricultural and operational diversity, and encourages climate-smart conservation practices that increase agricultural utility, protect soil and water quality, and strengthen the long-term viability of both public and private lands across Marin County.

All funded projects will have an additional public benefit by ensuring continued economic agricultural activity in Marin County and supporting the production of local food and fiber. Agricultural activities offer many benefits to the greater community including jobs and revenue to the local economy, as well as locally produced food, fiber, and other agricultural products. Protection of agriculturally productive land in Marin County also helps maintain open space, scenic views, and wildlife corridors. Given that healthy soils are the foundation for productive farms and ranches, Marin's working lands are dependent upon implementing smarter strategies to conserve soils and associated habitat, like grasslands, riparian forests, and other aquatic ecosystems such as creeks, ponds, wetlands, and groundwater, which all provide crucial habitat for native species.

Priority consideration will be given to proposals from applicants serving/and or located in communities of Marin County that are most impacted by social and economic inequities due to race, income level, gender, identity, religion, immigration status, disability, age, sexual orientation, or zip code.

## **Grant Focus Round 3, Fall 2024: Build Climate Resilience in Agricultural Working Lands**

Agriculturalists are directly impacted by environmental factors and economic markets. As weather patterns and climate trends continue to shift and become less predictable, agriculturalists in Marin County, and throughout California, face longer heat waves, increased drought, frequent flooding, and prolonged fire seasons. The goal of this small grants cycle is to provide resources to help agriculturalists plan, design, and implement climate smart practices that deliver long-term durable solutions to reduce emissions or energy use, increase water security, promote livestock well being, or diversify operations.

### Grant Impact:

Grants will promote climate smart agricultural practices and increase climate resilience through innovative practices. Projects will help reduce long-term costs, increase efficiency, and/or increase the capacity of agricultural productivity on the ranch using climate smart practices. Projects should support economic stability by contributing to the maintenance of existing agricultural production during erratic and unpredictable swings in temperature and precipitation (i.e. climatic) conditions. Projects that also have an ecological benefit by improving soil health, increasing species diversity in rangelands, and/or improving water quality are encouraged as part of a nature-based solution for climate resilience.

### Funding Guidelines

1. Maximum award amount is \$50,000. Proposals between \$5,000 - \$50,000 will be accepted.
2. MALT will award up to a total of \$200,000 in grants for the Round 3, Fall 2024 cycle.
3. Projects **must be completed within 18 months of grant execution**, unless otherwise noted in the executed grant agreement. MALT will follow up nine months after project approval if we have not heard from the landowner/applicant. MALT reserves the right to rescind funding if the project is not complete within 18 months of a signed Grant Agreement.
4. Proposals must include an estimated project cost and budget, preferably with quotes or bids for the proposed project work (see grant proposal form for more information).
5. Successful proposals include an applicant cost share of at least 10% of the total project cost. The 10% cost share is calculated from the total project cost once the project is completed (*e.g., for a project that costs \$40,000, the landowner will be reimbursed \$36,000, and for a project that is \$75,000 the applicant will have maxed out the grant amount at \$50,000*).
6. Grants will fund materials and labor that are used for the specific project outlined in the Grant Agreement. Labor recorded by the applicant will be reimbursed at a rate of \$33/hour (based on basic labor rate from USDA NRCS).
7. MALT's small grants program is a reimbursement program. No grant will be paid out until the project is complete, MALT has confirmed project completion, and project

standards have been met, as defined in the Grant Agreement. However, project applicants may submit a special request for advance payment. Advance payment would allow for a portion of the grant (*up to 50% of the estimated project cost*) to be paid before completion of the project. Advance payments will be considered on a case by case basis.

#### Eligibility

1. Landowner approval *or* proof of right to manage the land is required for all applicants.
2. All agriculturalists engaging in commercial agriculture (i.e., producing food and/or fiber products for sale) in Marin County are eligible for this grant. A MALT Conservation Easement **is not required** to apply for a grant from this program.
3. Applicants may be awarded only one (1) MALT small grant per fiscal year (July 1 - June 30). Small grants program recipients are still eligible for funding from MALT's Stewardship Assistance Program (SAP) for different projects, if applicable (limited to one (1) SAP grant per fiscal year).
4. Due to a limited funding pool, MALT requests applicants only apply if the resources are needed.
5. Current members of the MALT Board of Directors, MALT staff, and their immediate family members are not eligible for funding. For more information, please see the MALT Conflict of Interest policy. [\[MALT Conflict of Interest Policy\]](#)

#### Proposal Deadlines

- Thursday, August 1, 2024 - Grant guidelines and proposal form available to public
- Technical assistance is available by appointment during the work week
- Office hours will also be offered on the following days at the MALT office:
  - o Tuesday, August 27, 2024 - 3pm to 6pm
  - o Tuesday, September 3, 2024 - 3pm to 6pm
- Friday, September 6, 2024 - Grant proposal deadline, proposals must be submitted by 5:00pm through online portal or via email.
- Late October - Grant awards announced

#### Proposal Evaluation

1. Projects are evaluated to the degree that they advance MALT's mission and the goals of the small grants program to preserve agriculture, protect biodiversity, connect our community, and/or build climate resilience. In addition, the small grants program values social equity and justice, prioritizes agricultural and operational diversity, and encourages climate smart conservation practices that increase agricultural utility and protect soil and water quality.
2. Priority consideration will be given to proposals from applicants serving/and or located in communities of Marin County that are most impacted by social and economic inequities due to race, income level, gender, identity, religion, immigration status, disability, age, sexual orientation, or zip code.
3. All eligible proposals will be evaluated by a review committee composed of MALT staff and representatives from partner organizations with expertise in the grant focal area.
4. Proposals will be evaluated, scored, and ranked by selection criteria found in Exhibit C.

5. MALT may visit the proposed project site as part of any project proposal evaluation.
6. Proposals will be reviewed and all proposal applicants will be notified of their proposal status per the timeline above (Proposal Deadlines). A non-exhaustive list of potential projects can be found in the grant proposal form. All necessary permitting must be pursued by the applicant as part of the project.

#### Grant Awards

1. MALT will enter into a Grant Agreement with the grant recipients (and landowner, if different).
2. The Grant Agreement will include a detailed project scope, deliverables, the grant amount, and property owner approval.
3. Funding reimbursement will occur upon successful implementation of the proposed project, as determined by MALT staff after a site visit. All projects **must be completed within 18 months of execution of the Grant Agreement** unless otherwise noted in the executed Grant Agreement.
4. Grant recipients must allow MALT to photograph and video any completed projects, develop narratives around the project, and permit MALT to use such photographs, videos, and project narratives for fundraising and publicity purposes. Grant recipients may also be asked to attend MALT events to share their project and the results of the grant.
5. Project evaluation by MALT will be completed after the project is fully constructed and properly functioning. MALT staff will visit the project site to assess functionality, ensure project completion, and confirm that the terms of the Grant Agreement have been met. MALT staff will take photographs and video of the project, interview the grant recipient about the impact of the project, and confirm project extent and scope.
6. Monitoring of completed projects will be included in annual easement monitoring visits for applicants with MALT easements. For projects on properties without MALT easements, MALT reserves the right to check the status and conditions of the project annually for up to three years after the project is completed.

#### Reserved Rights

1. MALT reserves the right to request clarification and/or supplemental information from any applicant to facilitate evaluation of the proposed project.
2. MALT reserves the right to award funding it deems fit. This reservation includes and is not limited to: the right to reject any or all proposals for any reason; the right to award funding in different amounts to varying applicants; the right to award funding for multiple projects to the same applicant; and the right to request that an applicant reapply to remedy errors in submission.
3. MALT shall not be held liable for any expenses incurred by applicants before the date of the Grant Agreement.
4. MALT reserves the right to modify these guidelines, the attached exhibits, and any of the procedures at any time.
5. MALT reserves the right to terminate the program at any time and shall not be held liable for any projects without an executed grant agreement at the time of termination.

Attachments

- Exhibit A: Example Project List
- Exhibit B: Grant Proposal Form
- Exhibit C: Round 2 Selection Criteria

## **EXHIBIT A**

### **EXAMPLE PROJECT LIST**

- Rain Catchment (Gutters, tanks, pipes, pumps. Fognets, etc.)
- Increased water storage and distribution through tanks, troughs and pipe
- Water sensory, availability, monitoring, or automation technology (water efficiency)
- Creating shade through vegetation or structures for animal well being
- Smart/automated greenhouses/coops
- Vertical farming systems
- Conversion of gas/diesel engine to electric
- Solar panels and conversion to off grid
- Technologies that help reduce long-term feed costs (improve forage season, availability, productivity, forage nutrition, etc.)
- Technologies to reduce electricity, fuel, water use or feed costs
- Robotics or artificial intelligence technologies to replace fuel equipment or improve dairy efficiency and welfare
- Biodigester
- Technologies that improve harvesting efficiency and forage banking (hay dryer, bailing equipment, etc.)

**EXHIBIT B**

**ROUND 3 GRANT PROPOSAL FORM**

**EXHIBIT C**

**ROUND 3 SELECTION CRITERIA**