

Stewardship Assistance Program Guidelines, 2026-2027

Marin Agricultural Land Trust's (MALT) Stewardship Assistance Program (SAP) provides grants to farmers and ranchers operating on properties with a MALT easement. The program supports efforts to plan, design and implement conservation practices that increase agricultural productivity, improve soil and water quality and build ecological health. This provides an opportunity for easement-holders to proactively address concerns that have been identified through MALT's monitoring visits before they become compliance issues, and facilitates implementation of projects that have been identified in Agricultural Management Plans and Creek Conservation Area Management Plans.

Eligibility

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

1. Applicant is an agriculturalist engaging in commercial agriculture (i.e., producing food and/or fiber products for sale) in Marin County on land with a MALT conservation easement.
2. Grant applicant is either the landholder *or* has written approval of the landholder to manage and implement the project.
3. Applicants may be awarded only one (1) SAP grant per fiscal year (July 1 - June 30). In general, only one SAP award will be considered per easement per fiscal year. Exceptions may be considered in cases that clearly and justifiably advance the stewardship goals of the program. SAP recipients are still eligible for funding from MALT's Small Grants Program for different projects, if applicable (limited to one (1) small grant per fiscal year).
4. SAP funding is available to new projects that have *not* been started prior to execution of the Grant Agreement.
5. Easements must be in good standing, with no active violations.

Funding Guidelines

1. Maximum grant amount is \$20,000.
2. Projects must be completed as indicated in the executed Grant Agreement. MALT reserves the right to rescind funding if the project is not completed by the date indicated in the executed Grant Agreement. Changes to the project must be pre-approved in writing.
3. 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). The estimated project cost should outline the total cost of the project, not just the costs that would be covered by the grant award.

4. Proposals must include a grant recipient cost share of at least 15% of the total project cost. The 15% cost share is calculated from the total project cost once the project is completed. For example:
 - a. For a project that costs \$15,000 in total, the grant recipient will be reimbursed up to \$12,750 in eligible costs as per the grant agreement (because this is 85% of the total project cost, with the other 15% covered by the cost share).
 - b. For a project that costs \$30,000 in total, the grant recipient will be reimbursed up to \$20,000 in eligible costs as per the grant agreement (because this is the maximum grant award amount).
5. Grants will fund materials and labor that are used for the specific project as outlined in the Grant Agreement. Labor completed by the grant recipient, family member or non-licensed contractor will be reimbursed at a rate of \$33/hour. Labor must be documented in writing, including the name, date, number of hours, what work was completed, and payroll records. Licensed contractors can be reimbursed at their usual and customary billing rate. Invoices from contractors should include their license number and clear description of the date, hours, and work that was performed.
6. SAP 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.
7. Awardees are expected to maintain the project in functioning condition for at least five years after the completion of the project.
8. Due to the limited funding available, MALT requests applicants only apply if the financial resources are needed.

Proposal Deadlines

- MALT will accept proposals on a rolling basis during the fiscal year.
- Technical assistance is available by appointment Monday through Friday from 9am to 5pm. Contact Scott Dunbar at sdunbar@malt.org or (415) 663-1158 Ext: 313

Proposal Evaluation

1. Projects are considered based on how they advance MALT's strategy and the goals of the Stewardship Assistance Program to increase agricultural productivity, improve soil and water quality, and build ecological health.
2. MALT staff may visit the proposed project site as part of any project proposal evaluation.
3. Proposals will be reviewed and all applicants will be notified of their proposal status within sixty days of receipt of application. A non-exhaustive list of potential projects can be found in Exhibit A. All necessary permitting must be pursued by the applicant as part of the project. It is the recipient's responsibility to ensure that permitting and regulatory requirements are met.

Grant Awards

1. MALT will enter into a Grant Agreement with the grant recipients (and landholder, if different).
2. The Grant Agreement will include a detailed project scope, deliverables, timeline, 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 by the date indicated in 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. Participation is encouraged as this is vital to the continued success of the program.
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 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 SAP projects may be included in annual MALT easement monitoring visits. If there are questions or concerns about the project site, MALT may request access to visit the site outside of the scheduled annual monitoring visits. Awardees are expected to be available for site visits in these cases.

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 as it deems fit. This reservation includes but 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 consider exceptions to these guidelines in cases of significant opportunity to advance program goals, 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 SAP applicants before the date of the Grant Agreement.
4. MALT reserves the right to modify these guidelines, the attached exhibits, and any of the SAP procedures with proper notice to relevant parties.
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: Selection Criteria
Exhibit D: Examples of Ineligible Expenses

EXHIBIT A

EXAMPLE PROJECT LIST

Water Development

- Spring development
- Water tank
- Water trough
- Water pipe
- Water pump

Fencing

- Cross fence or interior fence
- Riparian fence
- Exclusionary fence (spring, structure, etc.)
- Virtual fencing systems

Landscape Restoration

- Streambank repairs
- Creek crossing repairs
- Pasture headcut
- Riparian plantings
- Hedgerow/windrow planting
- Compost application

Infrastructure Improvements

- Spillway/dam repairs
- Methane digester/manure management practices
- Road/sedimentation improvements

Conservation Planning/Data Collection

- Comprehensive nutrient management plan
- Agricultural conservation plan
- Implementing carbon farm plan recommendations
- Grazing plan
- Data collection/equipment

Implementation of Creek Conservation Area Management Plan (CCAMP), Agricultural Management Plan (AMP), or issues identified through MALT easement monitoring report:

- Other projects identified in the easement's Creek Conservation Area Management Plan
- Projects to address issues and concerns identified through MALT monitoring visits

EXHIBIT B

GRANT PROPOSAL FORM

Stewardship Assistance Program (SAP) July 1 - June 30	2026-2027
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Please contact MALT staff to discuss your project before submitting your application:
Scott Dunbar at sdunbar@malt.org or (415) 663-1158 Ext: 313

Grant Proposal Form

Applicant Information

1. Property/Ranch Name: _____
2. Applicant Name* _____
3. Total Estimated Project Cost _____
4. Grant Amount Requested (max. \$20,000) _____
5. Project Contact (if different from applicant) _____
6. Property Physical Address _____
7. Mailing Address (if different)* _____
8. Telephone Number _____
9. Email _____
10. Project requires additional permits/ triggers compliance issues. No ____ Yes ____ (list permits required or compliance issues _____)
11. Is the applicant or landholder a current MALT board member, MALT staff member, or of immediate relation to either? [See [MALT Conflict of Interest \(COI\) Policy](#)]
 No ____ Yes (explain relation) _____
12. Applicant Signature _____ Date _____
13. Landholder Name and Signature authorizing project implementation (if not the applicant).
 Name _____
 Signature _____ Date _____

*Please make sure that the applicant name and mailing address in your proposal matches your anticipated main contact for MALT's reimbursement process. Should your proposal be awarded you will need to fill out a W-9. The proposal and W-9 should match and should use whatever legal name, business, LLC, or Trust that you would like the reimbursement payment to be made to.

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Project Description

Please provide sufficient detail to fully communicate the size, scope, intended goals, and impact of the proposed project.

1. Project Summary:

a. Briefly describe the size and general land use of the agricultural operation(s).

b. Briefly describe the project.

c. Describe how your project aligns with the focus of SAP: To plan, design, and implement conservation practices that increase agricultural productivity, improve soil and water quality, and build ecological health. If the project addresses an issue identified by MALT monitoring staff or in a MALT Creek Conservation Area Management Plan, please describe.

2. Project Timeline: Provide estimated completion dates for the project. (MALT shall not be held liable for any expenses incurred by applicants before the date of the Grant Agreement).

Planned start date _____

Planned completion date _____

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3. **Project Deliverables:** Include a bulleted list of project deliverables that represent the final outcomes of the project once successfully completed (i.e. Install 1,300 linear feet of fencing, install 6 new troughs, and introduce rotational grazing in 2 new pastures).

4. **Project Budget:** Please list budget line items that directly relate to the project deliverables in the table below with an estimated cost, including materials and labor (Example of deliverables: Two 5,000 gallon water tank at \$5,000 cost per unit, totalling \$10,000). Include an additional page if necessary. Attach available quotes.

Item	# of units	Cost per unit	Total
		Material Total:	
Ranch Labor Estimate*	_____hrs	\$33.00\$/hr	
	_____hrs	\$33.00\$/hr	
		Labor Total:	
		Project Total (Material Total + Labor Estimate Total)	

*Ranch Labor is defined as applicant or on-farm staff labor, i.e. labor in addition to or not included in a formal bid or quote in "Material Total"

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5. Project Budget Narrative:

Describe the project budget:

- Please provide any additional context for the budget line items you have listed you feel would be helpful for MALT to know
- Describe any additional sources of funding, including in-kind support

6. Project Readiness: Describe the stage of planning and design of your project and when it will be ready for implementation if funded. For example, is the project fully designed and shovel ready, or do certain details need to be finalized before construction begins?

7. Other: If relevant, describe any other expected benefits and/or desired outcomes and/or additional information you would like to share about the proposed project not listed above.

Supplemental Information:

1. Quotes or bids for the work listed in the Project Budget
2. If relevant, map of the project site. MALT staff are available to assist with the creation of project maps.

Completed proposals and supplemental information should be submitted to Scott Dunbar via email sdunbar@malt.org or via mail to P.O. Box 809, Point Reyes Station, CA, 94956.

EXHIBIT C

SELECTION CRITERIA

MALT Stewardship Assistance Program

Selection Criteria

Date Application Submitted:	
Applicant Name:	
Ranch Name:	
Project Description:	

BASIC ELIGIBILITY (All rows must check "yes")		YES	NO	NOTES
Applicant/project is on land with MALT easement		☐	☐	
Easement holder is in good standing with no current violations or unresolved PURR's		☐	☐	
Ranch is producing commercial food or fiber		☐	☐	
Project advances MALT mission and protects or restores soil and water quality. If yes, provide brief explanation in notes.		☐	☐	
Applicant does NOT have a conflict of interest according to the MALT conflict of interest policy		☐	☐	
The applicant has NOT started implementing the project		☐	☐	
The applicant is ready to start implementation or purchasing material within 30 days of submission		☐	☐	
Landowner and operator (if relevant) have signed the application form		☐	☐	
If applicant is tenant or other business, landowner approval has been granted through signature		☐	☐	
SECONDARY ELIGIBILITY (Additional information to help inform project administration)		YES	NO	
Applicant is enrolled in a stewardship grant with a partner agency (NRCS EQIP, MRCD, Healthy Soils, ETC)		☐	☐	
Applicant is currently awarded a MALT small grant. If yes, note the project and date of grant agreement execution.		☐	☐	
Applicant is a tenant on the same ranch or has some relation to existing SAP project (any correlation, either same ranch or same person with a different ranch)		☐	☐	
Date last completed MALT Stewardship grant (SAP, DRAWS or Small Grants project)		Month/Year:		
Completed by:				
Reviewed by:				
SELECTION CRITERIA				
Please rank each proposal from 0 - 3 based on the criteria listed below, with 0 as the lowest score (least fit with criteria) and 3 as the highest score (most fit with criteria)				
Instructions:				
Category	Description/Criteria	High/Medium/Low	NOTES	
Program Alignment	Project aligns with intended impact, to protect or restore water or soil quality. Key tasks and deliverables are clearly and comprehensively described.			
Project Timeline	Project timeline is specific and provides details on project stages and deliverables.			
Project Readiness	Project is "shovel ready" and in final stages of planning. Project is ready to be implemented upon receiving award.			
Permit or Compliance Issues	Permitting is complete or is not required for project implementation.			
Project Budget	Necessary items for project completion are listed and amount(s) listed are reasonable for line item(s).			
TOTAL				

Reviewed by:

EXHIBIT D

EXAMPLES OF INELIGIBLE EXPENSES

The following are generally not considered eligible expenses through MALT's Stewardship Assistance Program:

Equipment: Purchase of equipment (such as seeders, tractors, drones) is not eligible for this program. Use of equipment to implement conservation practices is eligible for the program. Equipment purchases may be considered for MALT's [small grants program](#).

Fence removal: MALT does support new interior fence, but the cost to remove existing or dilapidated fence is not eligible under this program.

Perimeter Fence: This is considered the landowner's responsibility to maintain and upkeep. Installing or repairing perimeter fences does not help with rotational grazing and is seen as standard upkeep.

Used materials/supplies: Projects are expected to use new materials.