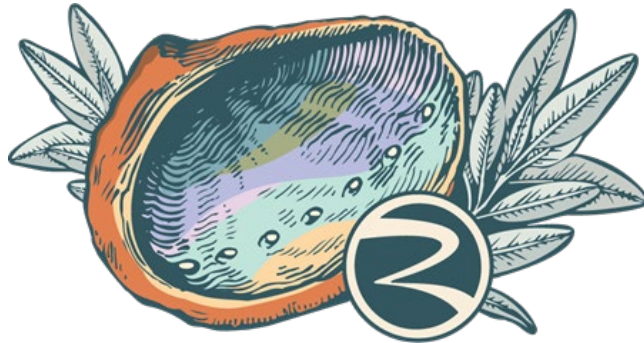


# Tribal Nature-Based Solutions Conservation Corps Grant Program

## Grant Procedures Manual



**Funded by:**



**NATURE-BASED**  
CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

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This manual was created to provide to Grantees guidance on grant administration and completion procedures. For copies of forms, additional information, or assistance, please contact the CCC at [TribalCorps@ccc.ca.gov](mailto:TribalCorps@ccc.ca.gov).

## I. Grant Program Overview & Eligible Projects

The Tribal Nature-Based Solutions Conservation Corps Grant Program (Tribal Corps) was established by the California Conservation Corps (CCC) via the Budget Act of 2022 (Assembly Bill 179) to fund and support programs that provide tribal youth with educational and career pathways linked to work on tribal lands. The CCC's Tribal Corps grant program is in collaboration with the California Natural Resources Agency's Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) initiatives, which aims to fund, coordinate, and implement projects that:

- a) Support sustainable land management practices to tackle environmental, social, and economic challenges, and/or
- b) Promote biodiversity protection, habitat restoration, wildfire-resilient, sustainably managed landscapes, and other conservation outcomes, and/or
- c) Accelerate natural removal of carbon and build climate resilience in our forests, wetlands, urban greenspaces, agricultural soils, and land conservation activities.

California Native American Tribes that receive a grant award must use funds to implement programs that provide workforce education to tribal youth and implement projects that address the objectives of the NBS initiative listed above.

Examples of eligible projects include:

- Habitat Conservation and Cultural Restoration
- Forest Health and Wildfire Resilience
- Urban and Community Greening
- Outdoor Access and Recreation
- Sustainable and Climate-Smart Agriculture

### Grant Award Process

- Upon selection for a grant award, an applicant will receive a Grant Award Letter documenting the amount awarded, the approved scope of work, and immediate next steps.
  - The CCC will begin preparing a draft Grant Agreement required by the State of California to receive grant funds.
    - Upon execution of the Grant Agreement, a grantee may begin incurring eligible grant expenses based on the approved Project Performance Period listed in the Grant Agreement.

## II. Eligible Projects

### General Requirements

All projects funded under this grant program must:

- Serve California Native American tribes and their communities located within the State of California. These projects may be on or off reservation and trust lands.
  - In the event projects are on lands under federal jurisdiction, applicants must obtain permission from the federal government.
  - In the event projects are on privately owned lands, they must be strategic so as to provide the greatest public benefit.
- Comply with EO N-82-20 and all other applicable state laws.
- Involve or promote educational and career pathways for tribal youth.
- Advance the Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) objectives through one or more of the following:
  - Supporting sustainable land management practices to tackle environmental, social, and economic challenges; and/or,
  - Promoting biodiversity protection, habitat restoration, wildfire-resilient, sustainably managed landscapes, and other conservation outcomes; and/or,
  - Accelerating natural removal of carbon and build climate resilience in our forests, wetlands, urban greenspaces, agricultural soils, and land conservation activities.
- Comply with AB 179 reporting requirements, including submission of measurable outcomes related to workforce development and environmental protection and restoration.
- Not be used to fulfill any mitigation requirements imposed by law.

Please note, projects may require limited waivers of sovereign immunity which will be determined on a case-by-case basis and dependent on the type and scope of the project.

### Environmental Review

California Environmental Quality Act (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.

Pursuant to California Public Resources Code section 4799.05, subdivision (e), Nature-Based Solutions Tribal Program projects carried out on lands subject to the jurisdictional control or the ownership of eligible applicants are exempt from CEQA.

Projects on land not under the jurisdiction of the tribal applicant will require CEQA compliance, and/or compliance with the federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

## Eligible Project Types

Eligible proposals must include workforce education and career pathway elements for tribal youth and implement the objectives of 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; and/or,
- b) Promote biodiversity protection, habitat restoration, wildfire-resilient, sustainably managed landscapes, and other conservation outcomes; and/or,
- 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.

Projects include but are not limited to:

- Habitat Conservation and Cultural Restoration, incorporating traditional ecological knowledge  
Examples:
  - Creating inclusive, accessible cultural landscapes
  - Restoring tribal food systems
  - River restoration
  - Invasive plant removal
  - Native plant/tree planting
  - Planting drought-resistant vegetation
  - Preservation and Restoration of Cultural and/or Historical Resources
- Forest Health and Wildfire Resilience  
Examples:
  - Cultural fire or prescribed fire program
  - 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
- Outdoor Access and Recreation  
Examples:
  - Trail restoration with disability accessibility
  - Restoration of traditional trails systems
  - Construction of pedestrian, bike, and/or trail pathways
  - Construction or restoration of park infrastructure and features

- 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

### **Submission of Project Information**

Grantees are responsible for developing and implementing their own projects; however, for those projects to be funded under this grant program they must be pre-approved by the CCC. This pre-approval is necessary for reporting purposes and to ensure eligibility and compliance.

Pre-approval can be obtained through the following process: At least four weeks prior to the scheduled start of the project, the Grantee must submit, via mail or electronically, the following information to the CCC Grant Coordinator:

- Project name
- Project partner
- Estimated start and end date
- Latitude and longitude coordinates of project site
- Project area map - The project area map should include enough detail to demonstrate the project location, treatment area, project activities, surrounding terrain, and need for the project. Topographical features and other notable landmarks should be clearly marked to allow easy identification.
- Project type, description, and quantified deliverables
- Description of Workforce Education and Career Pathways element(s)
- If applicable, Environmental Review documents (CEQA and/or NEPA)

## **III. Payment of Grant Funds for Eligible Costs**

### **Eligible Costs for NBS Tribal Corps**

Direct project-related costs and indirect/overhead costs that can be directly tied to the project that are incurred during the project performance period specified in the grant agreement are eligible for reimbursement. All eligible costs must be supported by appropriate documentation, including timesheets for in-house labor. Costs incurred outside of the project performance period are not eligible for reimbursement.

Eligible costs include:

- Direct Project or Program Staff – Direct project or program staff is labor directly related to the implementation of the project or program and includes youth

corpsmember labor, project administration and management, technical consultants, and sub-contractors.

- Costs for the services of grantee's employees directly engaged in project or program 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 grantee's various projects or programs.
- Costs charged to the project or program must be computed on actual time spent on the project or program and evidenced by time and attendance records describing the work performed on the project and program as well as payroll records. Overtime costs are allowed under the Grantee's established policy provided the regular work time was devoted to the same project or program.
- Equipment, Supplies and Materials – Costs for equipment, supplies, and materials directly related to the implementation of the project or program.
  - Supplies and materials may be purchased for a specific project or program, or may be drawn from a central stock, providing they are claimed at a cost no higher than that paid by the Grantee.
  - Equipment may be leased, rented, or purchased, whichever is most economical.
  - Costs for fuel and projected maintenance for leased, rented, or owned vehicles may be claimed under the project.
- Contracted Services – The costs of contracted services may be reimbursed if invoices are presented with payment requests that identify the specific project or program activities and include evidence of payment.
- Community Engagement – Costs of engaging community members through community meetings and events directly related to the project or program are eligible.
- Indirect/Overhead – Overhead costs are the non-project/program specific costs of doing business that are not directly related to the implementation of the project or program to be funded (for example, rent, computers, telephones, office supplies, internet access, copy machines, electricity). Certain types of overhead are not allowed including, food and beverage, fundraising, lobbying and entertainment. Any cost that is billed as a direct cost may NOT be included in indirect/overhead.

Grantees that wish to charge indirect/overhead must be able to document the appropriateness of the charges. It is the grantees' responsibility to determine this based on Generally Accepted Accounting Principles. It is recommended that grantees develop an appropriate method for calculating their indirect/overhead rate and determine what costs may be allocated to the grant, subject to the State's

approval. It is the responsibility of the grantee to maintain appropriate records for all indirect/overhead costs and to be able to provide those records in the event of an audit.

- Other Expenditures – In addition to the major categories of expenditures, grant funding may be used for miscellaneous costs necessary for execution of the project or program at the discretion of the State. Some of these costs may include:
  - Premiums on hazard and liability insurance to cover personnel and/or property.
  - Work performed by another section or department of grantee's agency that can be documented as direct costs to the project or program (see requirements above under Direct Project or Program Staff).
  - Transportation costs for moving equipment, program participants, or personnel.
  - Training costs for staff to increase cultural, Traditional Ecological Knowledges, and traditional competency.
  - Uniforms and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to outfit and equip tribal youth corpsmembers.

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.

## **Payment of Grant Funds**

The State of California administers most grant funds on a reimbursement basis, which means eligible costs to carry out the execution of the awarded program or project must be incurred and paid by the Grantee before the CCC will approve a payment request. In certain circumstances and in accordance with applicable Government Codes, a portion of grant funds may be advanced to grantees. This section lists the requirements for submitting grant reimbursement requests as well as the conditions and requirements for receiving an advance payment. Whether submitting a reimbursement request or advance request, all supporting documentation must demonstrate that the requested amounts are for valid expenditures incurred and that the expenditures are consistent with the intended purpose of the grant agreement.

## **Grant Reimbursement Requests**

The first reimbursement request must be submitted within three months of the initiation of expenditures. For accurate and timely reimbursement, the CCC recommends submitting payment requests monthly during the active project performance period, however

quarterly submissions are acceptable. Reimbursement requests must be submitted no more than three months in arrears.

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 512A - Grant Reimbursement Request Form (No Retention)

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 approved cost estimate. Reconciliation of expenditures between the Line-Item Tracker and accounting records should be performed with every invoice to ensure all financial information is accurate. The CCC will provide a template.

4. Documentation Verifying Expenditures:

For direct labor costs, documentation must include copies of payroll records for corpsmembers and staff for eligible, grant funded NBS activities. Payroll records must show paid time coded specifically to NBS through a unique project code and must align with applicable reimbursement/billing period.

For direct contract, materials, supplies, and other eligible expenditures, one of the following must be provided for each expense:

- 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.

Grantees may mail physical copies of grant reimbursement packets or email scanned copies. When emailing a grant reimbursement packet, the CCC requests that the packet be scanned as one document in the order listed above.



## Advance Payments

Government Code (GC) §11019 and its subsections authorizes the CCC to make advanced payments of up to 25% of the total grant amount if it is determined that an advance is essential for the effective implementation of the project. On a case-by-case basis, the CCC may authorize an advance payment at the request of the grantee.

Prior to requesting an advance, the CCC will require a copy of cost estimates provided by vendors and/or contracts for construction and/or materials specifying projected payment schedules. Requests for advances should be correlated with these contract schedules.

In accordance with the Government Code, the following controls and/or restrictions apply:

- Advance payments may not exceed 25 percent of the total grant amount awarded, except in rare circumstances in which the CCC determines that the project requires a larger advance and the grantee has provided sufficient justification and documentation.
- 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.
- All advanced funds must be spent on project-related expenses within three (3) months from the date of the advance.
- 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.
- 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.
- GC 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.

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 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

## **Reconciling Advance Payments**

When reconciling for advances, Grantee must submit the following documentation to demonstrate that the invoiced amounts are for valid expenditures incurred and that the expenditures are consistent with the intended purpose of the program:

- Cover Letter on Organization Letterhead with:
  - Date
  - Grant Agreement Number
  - Amount being reconciled
  - Signature of Authorized Representative
- CCC 534 - Advance Reconciliation Form
- Documentation Verifying Expenditures – An expenditure report must be submitted to reconcile the advance. Grantee may select the format of this report, but it must include the project/program code, expenditure type/code, date of expenditure, and amount. Additional documentation may be requested by the CCC to substantiate any expenditure.
- Budget Line-Item Tracker – Grantee must submit a tracking sheet documenting all expenses incurred and balances remaining for each budget category.

## **IV. Changes to an Approved Grant**

Changes to the Scope of Work, including program or project activities, deliverables, or budget, are permissible with prior approval. 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 the 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 grant agreement.

### **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.

## **V. Reporting Requirements**

Reporting for this program is required by legislative mandate. Reporting includes quarterly and annual submissions of project and program data as well as site visits by the CCC and other stakeholders.

### **Quarterly Check-ins**

Each quarter, the Grant Coordinator will check in to learn about the status of the project or program and whether the Grantee is encountering any issues or delays. Below are the due dates for quarterly check-ins:

- 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 Grantee must submit CCC 515 – Grant Completion Report within 90 days after the end of the Project Performance Period. 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.

## **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 payments will be approved and issued.

## **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.