



COUNTY of VENTURA

Agriculture/Weights & Measures

Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer
Edmund E. Williams
Chief Deputy
Korinne M. Bell

July 25, 2023

Board of Supervisors
County of Ventura
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

SUBJECT: Authorization for Submission of Grant Application for, and Acceptance of Grant Funding of up to \$500,000 from, the Department of Conservation Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program to Implement Certain Resilient Agricultural Lands Initiative Strategies

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

It is recommended that your Board:

1. Authorize the Ventura County Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer, or their designee, to submit a grant application for up to \$500,000 in grant funding from the Department of Conservation Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation (SALC) Program to implement certain Resilient Agricultural Lands Initiative (RALI) strategies as described in the Planning Grant Pre-Proposal, attached hereto as Exhibit 2.
2. Authorize the Commissioner/Sealer, or designee, to accept funding and sign agreements related to this grant application, including committing to up to a ten percent match, subject to approval of the County Executive Office and of County Counsel as to form and legal sufficiency.

FISCAL IMPACTS/MANDATES:

Mandatory:

Source of Funding:

Funding Match Required:

Impacts on Other Departments:

No

State of California Department of Conservation

Yes, minimum 10% of grant award from existing budget

Minimal (CEO – Sustainability Division,
RMA – Planning Division-CAP)

Summary of Revenue and Total Costs:

Revenue:

FY 2023-24

\$250,000

FY 2024-25

\$250,000

Costs:		
Direct	\$275,000	\$275,000
Indirect-Agency Dept.	\$ 0	\$ 0
Indirect-County Cap	\$ 0	\$ 0
Total Costs:	\$275,000	\$275,000
Net Costs:	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000

Current Budget FY 2023-24

FY 2023-24 Agriculture/Weights & Measures – Division 2800				
	Adopted Budget	Adjusted Budget	Estimate to Year-End	Estimated Savings/(Deficit)
Appropriations	\$9,728,597	\$9,728,597	\$9,728,597	\$0
Revenue	\$6,218,010	\$6,218,010	\$6,218,010	\$0
Net County Cost	\$3,510,587	\$3,510,587	\$3,510,587	\$0

Note: Revenue and appropriations are included in the FY 2023-2024 budget.

DISCUSSION:

The California Department of Conservation (DoC) SALC Program supports agricultural land conservation, economic growth, and sustainable development by providing grants for three types of projects: 1) Land Use Planning grants that support the development of local and regional land use policies and economic development strategies to protect critical agricultural land; 2) Agricultural Conservation Acquisition grants to permanently protect croplands, rangelands, and lands utilized for the cultivation of traditional resources from conversion to non-agricultural uses; & 3) Capacity and Project Development grants to expand organizational capacity to develop agricultural conservation acquisition projects. To apply for a Planning Grant, eligible applicants may submit a pre-proposal to garner feedback and strengthen proposals into robust grant applications. Successful applicants will receive a grant award up to \$500,000 maximum to reimburse grantees and participating stakeholders for all project-related eligible direct costs. The application must include a minimum of ten percent (10%) match funding. Grantees will continue to work closely with DoC staff on the implementation of project goals, tracking of funding expenditures and matching funds, and measurements of success.

On May 23, 2023, your Board received and filed the RALI, a strategic plan for the preservation of agriculture in Ventura County. (Exhibit 1.) The RALI, a product of a prior SALC grant, detailed four categories of strategies, defined by a Cornerstone, a Lead strategy, and five to seven additional strategies each.

Of those strategies, project partners from the SALC grant project have recommended pursuing a subsequent SALC grant to implement the following strategies:

- **Lead 2** - Enhance trust and collaboration among the agricultural community, key stakeholders and County leadership and staff by convening a quarterly Agricultural Roundtable.
- **Lead 4** - Establish a Rural-Urban Connections (RUCS) program at UCCE to help bridge the urban - rural divide;
- **2C** - Determine the infrastructure required regionally to increase the amount of locally grown food reaching local markets and to capitalize on the burgeoning local market as an economic outlet and opportunity to diversify;
- **2D** - Promote the purchase of local agricultural products to strengthen the local economy, enhance community resilience and foster community connections); &
- **4E** - Develop a "Grown in Ventura County" (or similar) regional brand to support recognition and awareness of the importance of working lands to the health and resiliency of the region.

As part of the grant application process, the Ventura County UC Cooperative Extension (UCCE), in partnership with the Department of Agriculture/Weights & Measures (AWM) and overseen by key stakeholders in the agricultural industry, submitted an application pre-proposal (Exhibit 2). In the pre-proposal, the project described would achieve the above strategies by:

1. Convening the Agricultural Roundtable through quarterly meeting to act as stakeholder review and guidance to the project
2. Planning and establishing the RUCS program with the creation of an Agricultural Summit at the UCCE to foster Urban/Rural connections and understanding
3. Partner with a consultant or consultant team to:
 - a. Study the County's infrastructure needs to increase the purchase of locally produced agricultural products; and
 - b. Develop the "Grown in Ventura County" regional brand and associated marketing campaign.

Of particular note is that these strategies are in accord with County aims described in the 2040 General Plan - specifically General Plan Policies (GPPs) AG-B (Regionally-Grown Products Sales Incentives) and AG-F (Enhance Access to Locally Grown Products). By partnering with the UCCE in applying for the grant funding later this year, the County could both:

- Strengthen the application by noting previously allocated funding for staff time and program costs for AG-B and AG-F as matching funds for the grant; and
- Use those funds and project partnerships to expand the scope, reach, and success of these GPPs.

If awarded, the expected grant term would be up to three years, with the awarded amount distributed across 24 months (the Grant Performance Period). The result is up to \$500,000 in awarded funds divided across up to two fiscal years.

I am respectfully requesting that your Board authorize the Ventura County Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer to apply for these grant funds and, if awarded, accept those funds and to authorize the Auditor-Controller to process the necessary budgetary transactions to adjust appropriations and revenue.

The County Executive Office, Auditor-Controller's Office, and County Counsel have reviewed this letter. If you have any questions, please contact Chief Deputy Agricultural Commissioner, Korinne Bell at (805) 933-2415.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Edmund E. Williams".

Edmund E. Williams
Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer

Exhibit 1 – Ventura County Resilient Agricultural Lands Initiative
Exhibit 2 – UCCE/AWM SALC Grant Program Pre-Proposal