

# Help With Applying For A CSCB Matching Grant

## How Is It Decided If My Project Will Get Funded?

CSCB Natural Resources Matching Grant applications are evaluated by a committee of people with natural resource conservation experience. Although they are given general guidelines, the committee members use their own expertise to assess project conservation merit and feasibility. There are many types of projects according to District needs, but ultimately it must be the combined expertise of the committee that decides which of the projects submitted that year offer the best natural resource benefits and are most likely to succeed. Each committee member brings their own valued proficiency to the process, just as each project is unique. By its nature, the Matching Grants Program involves "apples to oranges" project comparisons that necessitate a certain amount of subjective evaluation.

*Given that every year the competing projects submitted will vary in type and quality, here are some tools to help you deliver your best possible proposal. All of these tools can be found on our web site, [www.colorado.gov/ag/cscb](http://www.colorado.gov/ag/cscb).*

## 1. THE APPLICATION GUIDELINES

The application guidelines contain essential information about eligibility, requirements, expectations and the application process. It also contains background information about overarching principles of the program that can help craft a more relevant application.

Be sure to carefully read the application guidelines before starting your application.

## 2. THE APPLICATION

The application itself contains a great deal of guidance on what is required expected, and desired. Questions and pointers are specifically included to guide you into giving information the reviewers need or are looking for.

Be sure to carefully read the application before and as you write your application.

### **3. PREVIOUSLY FUNDED PROJECTS**

On the Matching Grants web page, there are links to different years of the program. Under those links are lists of the projects funded that year and, as they are completed, summaries of the project accomplishments. You can look at these to get some idea of the kinds of projects that have been funded. However - this in no way means that other types of projects would not be funded - or even find more favor, or that these projects would be funded in other years. As always, each year is unique in its pool of applicants and therefore competition for funding.

*Previously funded projects are listed in the appropriate year on the Matching Grants web site.*

### **4. GENERAL GRANT WRITING HELP**

CSCB has compiled some grant writing tips based on what they saw in the applications for their District Conservation Technician Program and Natural Resources Conservation program for 2008. These tips also contain a link to the Fundraising Guide we have on our web site, which contains more grant-writing help.

*The Grant Writing Tips document is on the Forms and Downloads page of the Colorado State Conservation Board web site.*

### **5. MATCH IDENTIFICATION**

You will need to identify, and as far as possible secure, sources for providing a dollar-for-dollar match for your funding request from the CSCB. The Application Guidelines has information on what the expectations are regarding cash and in-kind match. The CSCB also has an Excel workbook with a template for use in helping identify grant match sources, and also suggested templates for help later on in tracking some types of match.

*The Match Identification and Tracking Tools document is under Matching Grant Operational Materials on the Matching Grant web site - use it to help identify match sources and dollars as you plan your project and develop the budget.*

## 6. GOOD WRITING

There are many web sites and books that provide tips on how to write good grant applications. Grant reviewers understand that good writing does not guarantee a good proposal, but it is easy to make a bad impression with poor writing. Some key points to remember are:

- "Spell check" everything - poor spelling and grammar reflect a lack of professionalism.
- Be specific - reviewers time is precious and they are looking for pertinent information so don't make them hunt for it in a sea of irrelevant information.
- Be clear - reviewers shouldn't feel they are guessing at what information is being provided. Perhaps read the application aloud to catch awkward phrases.
- Answer the questions asked - reviewers compare projects based on comparisons of information and questions are posed to provide information used for ranking. You will provide other information you think will be helpful but always check you have clearly answered the question posed.
- If optional information can be submitted, **INCLUDE IT!**
- Use active language - conveys participation!

*Question example: Why You Want These Funds?*

*Poor response example:*

*Our district has several natural resource problems such as soil erosion, rangeland, water quality and noxious weeds. The district wants to provide landowner cost-share so that they can treat noxious weeds on their land. Noxious weeds are a big problem and have many bad effects. The district has a cost-share program for landowners so that they can treat their noxious weeds and that is what these funds are being applied for. Many of our landowners said that they have noxious weed problems.*

*Better response example:*

*The district currently implements a noxious weed treatment program that is popular with landowners. Noxious weeds degrade grazing land quality and prevent native plant species from establishing. Funds are being requested to control noxious weeds by offering cost-share incentives to landowners to treat pasture noxious weeds and reseed with native plants.*

Notice how fewer, to the point, and more concise sentences convey the request.