



Restore Grant Program Guidelines

Administered by
Zero Foodprint, a California Public Benefit Corporation

Last Updated: February 2024

Restore Grant Application Quick Reference:	2
Restore Grant Application Guidelines	3
APPENDIX: Approved Management Practices	11



Restore Grant Application Quick Reference:

Funding:

1. The maximum grant is \$25,000.
2. The minimum grant request is \$1,500.
3. Technical Assistance costs are covered in addition to the grant amount, and an estimate from the Technical Assistance Provider shall be included with each application.

Eligibility:

1. Applicants must be producing food for human consumption on agricultural land.
2. Applications must include at least 1 approved management practice (see [Appendix](#)).
3. A Technical Assistance Provider is required.
4. A carbon farm plan or conservation plan is not a requirement.
5. Applicants may only receive one grant per funding round.
6. Applicants who have received a prior Restore grant must have completed the project validation before being eligible for another Restore grant.
7. Applicants must not have exceeded the lifetime maximum receipt of \$75,000 in Restore grants.
8. Property owner approval or proof of right to manage the land is required.

Selection Process:

1. Grants are primarily awarded on the basis of "Cost per Ton" of CO₂e sequestered.
2. The cost will be calculated using the sum of the Grant Project Bid and Technical Assistance Estimate.

Timeline:

1. Applications are accepted year-round with quarterly deadlines on the 20th of January, April, July and October. Any application not awarded can elect to remain in the application pool for subsequent deadlines.
2. All applicants will receive a notice of award status within six weeks of the deadline.
3. All Restore grants are for one year of practice implementation. Implementation and use of funds must be completed within twelve (12) months of contract date.
4. Soil monitoring may occur up to five (5) years from final practice validation.

Validation:

1. Invoices for goods and services procured with grant funds must be submitted, as well as photos of practice implementation.
2. Technical Assistance Providers are required to document and confirm practices are completed in accordance with Conservation Practice Standards.
3. In some cases, soil testing may be required. If soil testing is required, you will be notified upon notice of award.



Restore Grant Application Guidelines

Purpose and Funding

Restore is a program of Zero Foodprint.

The primary goal of the program is to sequester atmospheric carbon in the form of soil organic carbon, resulting in myriad co-benefits for the public ranging from climate resilience to improved nutrient density. The secondary goals of the program are to distribute funds in a manner that reflects the following values: *(1) spurring broader adoption of regenerative agricultural practices; (2) increasing awareness of and demand for ingredients produced through regenerative agriculture; and (3) distributing Restore funds equitably.*

The Restore program serves as a catalyst for federal, state, and regional efforts to increase the beneficial ecosystem services provided by agriculture and specifically to advance climate change goals by improving soil health and sequestering atmospheric carbon. In doing so, the program aims also to engage the public in supporting the resilience and carbon benefit potential of the agricultural economy and land holdings.

The financial incentives made available through the Restore program enable farmers and ranchers to adopt conservation practices and, in exchange, businesses and consumers gain the opportunity to directly improve regional food systems and take regionalized climate action. The soil health practices funded through Restore will accrue value to the agricultural operation as well, improving water and nutrient management, among other benefits.

Zero Foodprint awards grants on a competitive basis and is not obligated to fund any Restore project application, even if the project has been deemed eligible or recommended for funding. Zero Foodprint may award an amount that is different from the amount requested or recommended.

Project Eligibility

Applicants must submit an application that demonstrates the fulfillment of the following conditions:

1. The project consists of at least one approved management practice listed in the [Appendix](#).
2. The applicant farm or ranch grows products for human consumption as food, feed for animals for human consumption, or beverage.
3. Application must be for complete practices. Partial implementation or remediation is not eligible.

Note: A carbon farm plan or conservation plan is not a requirement for eligibility.



Applicant Eligibility

All managers and owners of agricultural operations in California and Colorado are eligible to apply.

The maximum award is \$25,000 per recipient per round. The lifetime maximum for a recipient is \$75,000 in grants. Applicants who have met this cap are no longer eligible for Restore grants at this time.

Applicants who have previously received a Restore grant may apply, but will not be eligible to receive another grant until all contractual obligations of the previous Restore grant have been met, including verification.

Property Owner Approval

The property owner will be required to sign the grant funding agreement if grant funds are awarded, unless that power is otherwise delegated by the property owner to the applicant in writing.

Conservation Practices and Technical Assistance

Each approved practice has a corresponding Conservation Practice Standard (CPS) developed by the US Department of Agriculture, which must be followed in implementing the project scope. Multiple practices and multiple parcels may be included in one application. The number of practices does not impact the scoring/ranking process nor the likelihood of being funded.

Coordination with a Technical Assistance Provider will be required for grant selection. An estimated cost of Technical Assistance must be included in the application and will be factored into the total cost estimate. The cost of TAP will be in addition to the funds awarded for practice implementation. Eligible Technical Assistance Providers include any NRCS office, any Conservation District, or any individual or organization with an established history of providing technical assistance to farms and/or ranches for conservation practices and/or climate-smart agriculture. Zero Foodprint may request documentation including CV, references, and/or other materials to establish history of providing technical assistance.

Statement of Need

In recognition of our competitive bidding process within a limited funding pool, applicants who can readily afford to conduct the regenerative agriculture practice in question are asked to refrain from applying. Applying for projects and/or practices that are already funded or will be funded in full by other sources is not permitted.

Project Scope and Total Cost Estimate

Grants will be awarded primarily on the basis of cost-competitiveness in sequestering atmospheric carbon. In other words, proposed projects with the highest rate of carbon sequestration for the lowest grant project bid will be most likely to receive funding.



Carbon sequestration will be estimated using COMET-Planner. The use of COMET-Planner is a required element of the application. Grant amounts will not be altered due to any change in costs.

Project Scope is defined as the design and implementation of the management practices listed on the acreage (or linear feet) listed in the submitted application.

Project Cost is defined as the estimated true cost of implementing the project scope.

The **Grant Project Bid** is the dollar amount requested by an applicant to implement the practices under their proposed project scope – in other words, the bid is the price named by an applicant in order to fully implement the proposed practices and designate the practice as part of the Restore Program.

Since the selection process is a competitive bid, applications may increase their cost effectiveness by submitting a Grant Project Bid lower than the full Project Cost, in consideration of the expected co-benefits from conservation practice implementation. In other words, adopting the proposed practices is likely to improve soil health and induce savings from increased water efficiency, nutrient retention, and risk mitigation. This added value is particularly relevant to those applicants who own the subject property. Each applicant is encouraged to balance their own costs and benefits and cost effectiveness and to structure their Grant Project Bid to optimize their outcome.

Leveraging outside funding sources could help significantly lower requested bid amounts, increasing an application's competitiveness and extending the impact of Restore's grant funds, but is not required. Funds from cost sharing may not exceed two times the value of the project bid. For instance, if an applicant's project bid is \$25,000, they could apply additional outside funding of up to \$50,000 to fund a project with a total value of \$75,000. Technical Assistance Providers are asked to assist with paired funding opportunities. If the application is part of a larger project, any benefits included in the Restore application must be completed within the Restore contract term.

The maximum allowable grant project bid is \$25,000.

Example:

An applicant proposes to implement two practices: (a) compost application and (b) perennial hedgerow planting. The applicant estimates their total cost to be \$19,000 for executing both practices, with an additional estimate of \$1,000 for Technical Assistance.

Because the applicant was already considering an investment in hedgerows as a windbreak, and has seen compost application boost crop yields, the applicant proposes to cost share on these practices and apply with a total grant project bid of \$14,000.



The Restore program will evaluate the cost-effectiveness for this proposal by estimating the amount of atmospheric carbon sequestered by the total project using the COMET-Planner and then dividing the grant project bid plus the Technical Assistance estimate by that amount. For example, if implementation of the two proposed practices in this application are estimated to sequester 500 metric tons of CO₂ and the grant project bid is \$14,000 plus the TAP estimate of \$1,000, the sum, \$15,000, will be divided by 500 to reach a cost-effectiveness ranking for the project of \$30/metric ton of CO₂. This bid is lower than the project's actual total cost estimate of \$19,000, giving this application a competitive edge in the selection process described below.

Calculation:

$$\frac{(\text{Grant Project Bid} + \text{Technical Assistance Estimate})}{(\text{COMET Planner CO}_2\text{e} \times \text{Practice Lifespan})} = \text{Cost Per Ton}$$

Selection Process

1. California-based applications will be reviewed and scored using the CDFA's online tool [COMET-Planner](#)¹ to calculate a soil and woody biomass carbon sequestration estimate based on the provided information, with the support of technical experts.
2. Applicants from all other states will be reviewed and scored based on the NRCS [COMET-Planner 3.0](#).
3. Applications from the pool will be ranked by cost per ton of CO₂e, with the lowest cost per ton being ranked #1. This amount includes the grant project bid and the TAP estimate.

Example:

Applicant	Project Bid	TAP estimate	CO ₂ sequestration estimate	\$/ton CO ₂	Rank
Organic Orchard	\$1,800	\$200	100 tons CO ₂	20	1
Roost Ranch	\$13,500	\$1,500	300 tons CO ₂	50	2
Farro Farm	\$7,000	\$1,000	80 tons CO ₂	100	3
Arctic Acres	\$25,000	\$3,000	100 tons CO ₂	280	4
Dharma Dairy	\$10,000	\$500	20 tons CO ₂	525	5

¹ The single exception to this will be for Compost Application on Grazed Rangeland, which has been divided into two practices, one following CDFA standards, and one following Ryals & Silver standards. Please refer to the Appendix for more information.



Projects will be scored for funding based on cost-effectiveness, or total cost per metric ton of modeled CO₂e.

4. Boosts in cost per ton will be given to project proposals with additional values listed below. Preference will be conferred using points that lift an application's ranking. Each boost will result in a 30% reduction in an applicant's total cost per ton. No application will be granted more than 2 boosts total. These boosts are for ranking purposes only.

Example:

Applicant	Initial \$/ton CO ₂	Initial Rank	# of boosts	Boosted \$/ton CO ₂	Boosted Rank
Organic Orchard	30	1	0	30	2
Roost Ranch	50	2	2	25	1
Farro Farm	100	3	0	100	3
Arctic Acres	250	4	0	250	5
Dharma Dairy	300	5	1	210	4

- a. Applicants that supply ingredients or goods to a Zero Foodprint member business may list that business to receive a circularity boost.
- b. Restore grants will be awarded across a diverse range of demographics, including grantees who meet the NRCS and/or Zero Foodprint definition for Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher:

Socially Disadvantaged groups consist of the following:

- American Indians or Alaskan Natives
- Asians
- Blacks or African Americans
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islanders
- Hispanics²

For the purposes of the Restore program, at least 50 percent ownership in the farm business must be held by socially disadvantaged individuals.

² https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/people/outreach/slbfr/?cid=nrcsdev11_001040. Note that NRCS authorities do not consider gender or sexuality within the scope of Socially Disadvantaged Farmers or Ranchers.



5. Applicants will be notified of their award status within six weeks of the close of the application period.

Execution of Grant Agreement

After award of the grant and prior to disbursement of funds, the grantee will execute Zero Foodprint's grant funding agreement, which includes:

- property owner approval
- detailed project scope
- grant application documents
- Technical Assistance Provider approval of project scope and intent to verify completion of implementation.

If the agreement has not been executed within 30 days of notification of the award, Zero Foodprint reserves the right to transfer the grant to the next eligible project.

Timeline for Funding and Project Completion

Projects must be completed on a schedule proposed in the application and finalized in the executed grant agreement.

Depending on the establishment needs of specific practices, the grant agreement may require basic maintenance (e.g., weeding, irrigation) for up to five years.

Funding for practices will be provided following execution of the grant agreement in installments:

- Zero Foodprint will release 50% of the grant amount in advance of implementation of the project described in the application.
- Upon submission and review of the Project Update Form, Zero Foodprint will release the second grant payment, constituting 30% of the total grant funds, within 30 days of approval.
- The final 20% of grant funds will be made upon verification from the TAP.

If the project cannot be completed within the required timeframe, the grantee may be required to return any unexpended funds to Zero Foodprint and may become ineligible for future applications. Unforeseen/unpreventable circumstances, such as wildfire or drought, may permit additional flexibility in project implementation. Grantees are eligible to apply for an extension of up to one year via the Extension Request Form.

California Compost Application

If procuring compost in California, awardees are required to source from a CalRecycle approved facility, listed [here](#). Invoices for compost purchases shall be submitted in the format found [here](#).



Outcome Evaluation and Storytelling

At no cost to the grantee, technical assistance providers may conduct check-ins to help Zero Foodprint better understand and quantify the positive impact of the project. Grantee agrees to a good faith effort to cooperate with efforts to provide pictures and brief descriptions of the farm and/or project for the purposes of marketing and fundraising.

Grantee may be asked to disclose information related to the actual cost of practice implementation. Note that no changes will be made to the funding amount or grant agreement as a result of the actual cost, though grantees are encouraged to share this information in order to inform Zero Foodprint's understanding of the grant program and the total cost of implementing soil carbon sequestration.

Application Reservations

Zero Foodprint reserves the right to make changes to this application process without liability, obligation or requirement to pay any costs incurred by any applicant in applying for grant funding, including but not limited to:

1. Reject any applications without any reason for the rejection.
2. Ask the applicant to revise or modify their application.
3. Modify, in the final grant funding agreement, any terms and/or conditions described in this guide.
4. Terminate this process at any time.
5. Change any of the procedures or processes described in this guide.

Applying for a Demonstration Project

We are not currently accepting applications for Demonstration Projects.



Attachments:

Appendix —Approved Management Practices

Additional Resources:

Grant Funding Agreement Sample: link available at

<https://www.zerofoodprint.org/apply>



APPENDIX: Approved Management Practices

Management practices approved for Restore grant funding are quantifiable under the US Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) [COMET-Planner](#) online tool.

COMET-Planner quickly evaluates the potential carbon sequestration and greenhouse gas reductions from adopting NRCS conservation practices, standardized through Conservation Practice Standards (CPS). Each Restore grant must be implemented following the CPS assigned to each practice.

The following lists all the eligible practices and many can be implemented concurrently. Some are annual practices, like cover-cropping, and some are perennial improvements, like planting woody plants as a hedgerow. The practices are categorized below by type of agricultural land.

Additional information on these practices can be found in the NRCS [National Handbook of Conservation Practices](#)³, on the NRCS website listing [Conservation Practices](#)⁴, using the online [COMET-Planner](#) (<http://comet-planner.com/>) tool, and the Healthy Soils Program Implementation Guidelines available at www.zerofoodprint.org/apply.

³ <https://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/OpenNonWebContent.aspx?content=43973.wba>

⁴ https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/technical/cp/ncps/?cid=nrcs143_026849



	Practice Name	CPS #	Practice Lifespan ⁵
1	Alley Cropping †	311	15 years
2	Conservation Cover	327	5 years
3	Conservation Crop Rotation	328	1 year
4	No-Till	329	1 year
5	Contour Buffer Strips	332	5 years
6	Cover Crop	340	1 year
7	Reduced-Till	345	1 year
8	Multi-story Cropping †	379	10 years
9	Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment	380	15 years
10	Field Border	386	10 years
11	Riparian Forest Buffer †	391	15 years
12	Filter Strip	393	10 years
13	Grassed Waterway	412	10 years
14	Hedgerow Planting †	422	15 years

⁵ Based on the NRCS National Handbook of Conservation Practices, unless marked with an asterisk. Those practices marked with an asterisk do not currently have a published NRCS Practice Lifespan and scientific consensus regarding the lifespan of the practice may not be available; for the purposes of the Restore Program, Practice Lifespan was determined using various sources including [A Lifecycle Model to Evaluate Carbon Sequestration Potential and Greenhouse Gas Dynamics of Managed Grasslands](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10021-013-9660-5) (<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10021-013-9660-5>) and <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26263673/>

† Practices marked with this symbol may be unavailable in certain Colorado Counties



	Practice Name	CPS #	Practice Lifespan
15	Mulching	484	1 year
16	Forage and Biomass Planting	512	5 years
17	Prescribed Grazing	528	1 year
18	Range Planting	550	5 years
19	Strip-Cropping	585	5 years
20	Nutrient Management	590	1 year
21	Vegetative Barriers Establishment	601	5 years
22	Herbaceous Wind Barriers	603	5 years
23	Tree/Shrub Establishment †	612	15 years
Available to California Applicants only:			
24	Silvopasture	381	15 years
25	Compost Application on Grazelands (COMET)	808	3 years*
26	Compost Application on Annual Croplands	808	1 year*
27	Compost Application on Perennial Croplands (Orchards and Vineyards)	808	3 years*
28	Compost Application on Grazelands (Ryals) ⁶	N/A	20 years*
Available to Colorado Applicants only:			
29	Critical Area Planting	342	10 Years

⁶ Compost Application on Grazeland has two practice standards based on different compost application rates. Please confirm your proposed practice with your Technical Assistance Provider. Sequestration for this practice is calculated as 1.49 metric tons per acre per year.

