



## IWRB ESPA Groundwater to Surface Water Conversion Grant Criteria

The Idaho Water Resource Board (IWRB) is offering grant funding to be used for water projects targeted at converting lands irrigated from groundwater to surface water irrigation (Conversion Projects).

Projects that convert irrigated lands from groundwater to surface water irrigation support the Idaho economy, provide economic value, and ensure long-term water resource stability and sustainability. The IWRB has developed these criteria to provide financial assistance on a competitive basis through grants to eligible entities interested in pursuing eligible projects to convert existing irrigated lands from groundwater to surface water irrigation.

**Eligible Projects:** Projects located in an eligible geographic area that propose to convert from groundwater to surface water irrigation. “Hard Conversions” are projects that would permanently convert to the use of surface water. “Soft Conversions” would partially convert to the use of surface water but may have to use groundwater when surface water is not available.

**Ineligible Projects:**

- Projects that are already completed or underway by the application deadline

**Eligible Entities:** Groundwater Districts, Irrigation Districts, Irrigation Boards of Control, Canal Companies, and Municipalities. Individuals must apply through one of the eligible entities.

**Eligible Geographic Area:** Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA) area of common groundwater supply

**Funding Details:**

- IWRB grant portion cannot exceed (50%) of total project costs for soft conversions. IWRB grant portion cannot exceed (75%) of total project costs for hard conversions.
- Must agree to cease pumping the proposed portion of groundwater related to project and that delivered conversion water will be used only on lands with an existing groundwater right tied to this project. Groundwater rights previously used on the conversion project lands cannot be put in the Water Bank for lease.
- If project construction is underway or completed by the application deadline the project is not eligible for this funding opportunity. Projects that have previously been awarded conversion grant funding are eligible to apply for additional funding.
- Costs incurred prior to the grant award date are not eligible for reimbursement
- Reimbursement requests can be made once a cost-reimbursement contract is established between the awardee and IWRB

- Reimbursement of invoices will not surpass 50% for soft and 75% for hard conversions of the invoice amount (“Reimbursable Funds”) submitted to Board Staff. Of the Reimbursable Funds, 10% will be retained until Awardee submits a certificate of completion.
- Contract term will not exceed 3 years after the grant funding award (date of IWRB Resolution) unless an extension is approved by IWRB’s contract manager.
- Funds may be reallocated if a project is not completed within the term of the cost-reimbursement contract, or if the Awardee does not provide contract development information requested within 90 days after the grant award date

**Application Requirements:** For the grant proposal to be considered, the following must be provided:

- A **cover letter** that is addressed to the IWRB and with the eligible entity’s letterhead. The letter must contain a project summary and the project manager’s contact information. The summary must include the funding request dollar amount and expected total project cost, as well as all other funding sources.
- An **application** containing the following:
  1. Project sponsor (eligible entity) description (organization type, background, revenue sources, current operations)
  2. Project description (narrative, infrastructure description, repair, rehabilitation, improvement needs/objectives/benefits, 30% design plans, land entitlements at project location, description of any known environmental issues)
  3. Project location (county, water source, PLS and/or Lat/Long), including map
  4. Project timeline, including start and completion date
  5. Detailed cost estimates, including all labor and materials. In-kind work must be detailed and included in cost estimates.
  6. Summary table that documents cost-share percentage for each funding source including in-kind work. If other grants are required to complete the project (USACE, NRCS, FEMA, etc.), include timelines for receiving those funds.
- Documentation is required from **Irrigation District/Canal Company of support** for the project **and agreement to deliver** the surface water supply for the conversion project. Documentation of long-term leases, storage water, existing shares, etc. to support the proposed project *if* not directly diverted from a river. Documentation should address the term of the surface water delivery agreement and how often water will be available to support the project.
- Documentation from **Groundwater District of support** for the project and agreement to administer the pumping reduction.
- **List of groundwater rights** on conversion project lands
- **Proof of liability** insurance for general construction, i.e., ICRMP.
- **Completed Applicant Information Sheet** provided by IWRB.
- Addresses all **evaluation criteria** described below.

**Evaluation Criteria:** To maximize the effective and efficient use of available funds, grant applications submitted by eligible entities for eligible projects will be evaluated, scored (*100-point scale*), and ranked according to the following criteria. Applications that do not meet the eligibility requirements will not be scored and will be returned. Project scoring will be used to prioritize funding. Applications shall discuss how the project under consideration meets the evaluation criteria.

**Benefits/Effectiveness (Up to 75 points)**

- Project with a greater percentage of pumping offset will receive more points. (15 points)
- The application demonstrates a reduction in average annual groundwater pumping in acre-feet associated with this project. (10 points)
- The applicant demonstrates the dependability of the surface water supply in terms of quantity and seasonal availability. (5 points)
- The applicant demonstrates aquifer storage benefits and/or reach gain benefits associated with the project. Applicants should submit modeling results to support their claims. (20 points)
- The applicant demonstrates the project involves multiple entities, or the project is regionally focused. (5 points)
- The project includes a recharge component. (10 points)
- Conversions that are greater than 85% efficient will receive more points. (10 points)

**Project Proposal Clarity and Detail (up to 15 points)**

- Clarity and detail of project proposal and location: need, description, budget and benefits, detailed map(s) of project area that have a legend, county, and coordinate or PLS (Township, Range, Section) information. (5 points)
- Plans and specifications included with the grant application (5 points)
- Description of the personnel (entity's employees, contractors and/or volunteers) that will plan, design, construct and implement the proposed project (descriptions may include the number, qualifications (resumes if applicable) and time of personnel that will be involved in the project. (5 points)

**Urgency of Project (up to 10 points)**

- Urgency of the project – The project is necessary to avoid curtailment or to help support a settlement (10 points)

**Application Submittal:**

Applications can be emailed to [IWRBGrants@idwr.idaho.gov](mailto:IWRBGrants@idwr.idaho.gov). Applications that are emailed must be received by the application due date.

Applications that are mailed must be received on the application due date. Mailing address:

ATTENTION: IWRB GRANTS TEAM  
IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES  
PO BOX 83720  
BOISE, ID 83720-0098

Applications can be dropped off in person on the 6th floor of the Idaho Water Center in Boise. Applications must be dropped off on weekdays, excluding holidays, between the hours of 8:00am and 5:00pm. The Idaho Water Center is located at:

IDAHO WATER CENTER  
322 E Front St, Suite 648  
Boise, ID 83702-7371

**Grant Process:**

- IWRB staff evaluate and score applications based on IWRB approved evaluation criteria
- IDWR staff will perform modeling of application conversion scenario to calculate benefit
- IWRB staff present funding recommendations to IWRB Finance Committee
- Funding awarded at a regular IWRB meeting

- IWRB staff will notify project applicants of grant approval and will administer cost-reimbursement contracts

**Additional Conditions of Award:**

Funding may be reallocated if:

- Requested information necessary to develop a contract is not received from the project Awardee within 90 days of the award dated resolution
- A proposed contract is not signed and returned within 60 days of issuance
- If the project is not completed within the award contract term
- The contract expires without a renewal or extension request from the Awardee

**Cost-Reimbursement Process:**

- Awardee must be registered with the Idaho Secretary of State (SCO) in IPRO Supplier Portal and in PaymentWorks, See “Action Center” on the homepage of SCO at <https://www.sco.idaho.gov/LivePages/scohome.aspx>
- Funds will be distributed upon Awardee submitting an IWRB acceptable funding reimbursement request to the IWRB
- Reimbursement of invoices will not surpass 50% for soft conversions and 75% for hard conversions of the invoice amount (“Reimbursable Funds”) submitted to IWRB staff. Of the Reimbursable Funds, 10% of funds will be retained until Awardee submits a certificate of completion.
- The IWRB and IDWR staff will review and upon approval, pay invoices in accordance with Idaho Code § 67-2302
- In-kind services, labor, and materials must be invoiced to IWRB to be eligible for reimbursement
- The IWRB shall determine the value of in-kind contributions of materials and labor
- Invoices should be sent to [IdwrPayable@idwr.idaho.gov](mailto:IdwrPayable@idwr.idaho.gov)
- A certificate of project completion and a financial summary of the total project cost shall be submitted by the Awardee in order to receive final reimbursement

**In-kind Matching Funds Documentation.** In-kind matching contributions must be adequately documented and verifiable from the Awardee’s official records. Documentation must be sufficient to answer the following:

- Awardee must be able to demonstrate that the contribution is from an acceptable source.
- Awardee must be able to demonstrate what is being used as match is suitable for match.
- The IWRB shall determine the value of the in-kind contribution
  - Awardee is responsible for providing accurate documentation to support their in-kind valuation
  - Value shall be based on standard objective sources rather than Awardees’ estimates
- Awardee must certify that the information is correct and IWRB must review and approve

Accounting records must be supported by source documentation such as vouchers, canceled checks, invoices, payroll, time and attendance records, contract and sub-grant award documents, or other required forms.

**Force account labor and equipment.** The use of the Awardee’s staff (labor) and/or equipment costs must be verifiable from the Awardee’s accounting system. For labor, the records must include: the name of each worker, dates worked, hourly rate of pay, number of hours worked specific to the grant activity, and the total cost for each worker. Documentation of equipment costs must include the type of

May 2026

equipment used, dates used, hourly rate value, number of hours used, how the hourly rate was determined and total cost.

**Donated contract labor and volunteer services** may be counted as matching share if they are an integral and necessary part of the approved work.

- Rates claimed for volunteer services must be consistent with those rates paid for similar work in other activities and must not include fringe benefits and overhead costs.
- Match must be documented and, to the extent feasible, supported by the same methods used by the Awardee for its own employees.
- At minimum this includes signed and dated time sheets filled out by volunteers working and approved by the supervisor with first-hand knowledge of the activity