

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).

Eligible Projects: Projects located in eligible geographic areas 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 projects would partially convert to the use of surface water but may have to use groundwater when surface water is not available.

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

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

Grant Considerations:

- 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. Although projects that have previously been awarded conversion grant funding are eligible to apply for additional funding.

Grant Application Requirements: Grant applications will require the applicant to provide the following information:

- Project background (infrastructure description, repair, rehabilitation, improvement needs/objectives/benefits)
- Project sponsor description (organization type, background, revenue sources, current operations)
- Project description (narrative, map, 30% design plans and cost estimates, land entitlements at project location, description of any known environmental issues).
- Project budget and implementation schedule
- Project funding sources (IWRB grant, other state and federal grants, sponsor's contribution)
- If not directly diverting from a river, 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, and documentation of long-term leases, storage water, existing shares, etc. to support the proposed project.

May 2025

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.

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

Project Proposal Clarity and Detail (up to 15 points)

- Clarity and detail of project proposal: need, description, budget and benefits (*up to 5 points*)
- Plans and specifications included with the grant application (*up to 5 points*)
- Description of the personnel (sponsor 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. (*up to 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 (*up to 10 points*)

May 2025

Application Submission:

- Applications can be emailed to IWRBGrants@idwr.idaho.gov. Applications that are emailed must be received by 11:59 pm on the application due date.
- Applications that are mailed must be received by 11:59 pm on the application due date.

Mailing address:

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

- Applications can also 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 STE 648
BOISE, ID 83702-7371

Grant Process:

- 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
- IWRB will reimburse grantees for project costs upon submittal of funding reimbursement request

Cost-Reimbursement Process:

- Funds will be distributed upon applicant submitting funding reimbursement requests to the IWRB
- Applicant funding requests shall include a cover letter which shall include a description of the project activities, dates for performing the project activities, and contractor or supplier invoices
- In-kind services, labor, and materials must be invoiced to applicant to be eligible for reimbursement
- Invoices should be sent to IdwrPayable@idwr.idaho.gov
- A certificate of project completion shall be issued by the applicant in order to receive final reimbursement