

# Tribal Nature-Based Solutions Climate Bond 2026

## Solicitation: Frequently Asked Questions

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Detailed explanations of the Tribal Nature-Based Solutions (TNBS) guidelines and the application process, materials required, and definitions can be found in the complete, final grant guidelines document found at:

<https://resources.ca.gov/Initiatives/Tribalaffairs/TribalNatureBasedSolutionsProgram>

### **What is the Tribal Nature-Based Solutions Program?**

The California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) established the Tribal Nature-Based Solutions (TNBS) Program in response to feedback received from California Native American tribes during the tribal consultations on Governor Newsom's [Executive Order N-82-20](#) (Nature-Based Solutions Executive Order), the [Pathways to 30x30 Strategy](#), and [Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy](#).

The Tribal Nature-Based Solutions program and grant funds are part of this commitment to partner with California Native American tribes in advancing their multi-benefit nature-based solutions priorities.

### **What is the Climate Bond?**

In November 2024, California voters approved Proposition 4, also known as the Climate Bond. This historic \$10 billion investment helps safeguard our communities, natural resources, and future in the face of climate change. The California Natural Resources Agency was named as the lead agency for administration of the bond.

Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 93040 ([Senate Bill 867](#)) otherwise known as, the Climate Bond, Proposition 4, or the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024 ([Climate Bond](#)) and Chapter 6, statutes of 2024, the California Legislature appropriated \$10 million to the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) for funding California Native American tribes' priorities for multi-benefit nature-based solutions projects located within the state of California. Approximately \$9.2 million is available for tribal multi-benefit nature-based solutions projects.

### **What's in the Climate Bond?**

The Climate Bond advances investment in local communities in a variety of ways including wildfire prevention and improvement of drinking water facilities, protection of nature, coastal resilience, and public access to parks, trails, and the coast. These funds will support projects that make a tangible, lasting difference in communities across California by making them more resilient in the face of severe weather events and improving aging infrastructure, while promoting greater access to public spaces for all Californians.

At least 40 percent of Climate Bond funding **must benefit disadvantaged and severely disadvantaged communities and vulnerable populations**. CNRA and its partner departments are committed to ensuring these investments reach the Californians who need them most.

### **Who does the Bond Prioritize?**

The Climate Bond language requires that “*at least 40 percent of the total funding made available pursuant to this division shall be invested in programs or projects that provide direct and meaningful benefits to disadvantaged communities, severely disadvantaged communities, and vulnerable populations.*” The following definitions come directly from the bond (PRC Section 90100) and will be used across 2024 Climate Bond programs:

- **Disadvantaged community (DAC):** A community with a median household income of less than 80 percent of the area average or less than 80 percent of statewide median household income.
- **Severely disadvantaged community (SDAC):** A community with a median household income of less than 60 percent of the area average or less than 60 percent of statewide median household income.
- **Vulnerable population:** A subgroup population within a region or community that faces a disproportionately heightened risk or increased sensitivity to impacts of climate change and *that lacks adequate resources to cope with, adapt to, or recover from such impacts.* (Note: tribes are considered *vulnerable populations*.)

### **What projects are eligible under TNBS Climate Bond Funds?**

Eligible projects must include a land acquisition component as well as one or both of the following categories:

1. Planning activities for multi-benefit nature-based solutions projects AND/OR
2. Implementation activities of multi-benefit nature-based solutions projects such as watershed restoration, prescribed fire planning, invasive species removal, tribal workforce development, etc.

### **Who can apply for the grant?**

- Eligible applicants include California Native American tribes and tribally led entities located in California. Pursuant to the definition provided by the Climate Bond in Public Resources Code Section 90100, a tribe is defined as “a federally recognized Native American tribe or a nonfederally recognized Native American tribe listed on the California Tribal Consultation List maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission.”
- Applications can be submitted by non-tribal entities on behalf of inter-tribal consortiums, tribal conservation districts, or partnerships, but the application must show California Native American tribe(s) is actively partnering with and supporting the application through a signed letter or resolution from the chairperson of the tribe(s) and describe how the project will serve the supporting tribe(s) and community.

## **What is an Escrow Ready Project?**

Escrow Ready projects refer to multi-benefit ancestral land return projects that are partially funded and can demonstrate requested grant funds will complete acquisition at Fair Market Value. These projects can demonstrate the completion of escrow-ready documents including, but not limited to, basic title analysis of desired property, Phase I Environmental Assessment, Property Appraisal Report, Buyer's Statement, and finalized Purchase & Sale Agreement for the purchase of the property at Fair Market Value\*.

Please note, the costs associated with escrow ready documents are not eligible for reimbursement if the applicant isn't selected for an award or doesn't enter into a grant agreement. *\*Completion of escrow ready documents is not an eligibility requirement for Escrow Ready Ancestral Land Return Project but will enhance competitiveness.*

Escrow ready projects will need to encumber funds by March 31, 2027, close escrow by July 30, 2027, expend funds by January 1, 2029, and submit all final invoices by March 31, 2029.

To meet the expedited encumbrance and expenditure deadlines, Escrow-Ready projects must utilize the grant agreement template language as is and applicants forgo negotiation of grant terms. Deed restriction, work plan, and budget will undergo negotiation for finalization before grant agreement execution. Projects that are eligible for TNBS funds but that are not awarded during the Escrow Ready review period will be automatically included in the Standard Grant Review Process for further consideration. If additional information is required, Staff will let an applicant know.

## **How does the application process work?**

This grant program consists of a progressive, three-step evaluation process:

Step 1: Preliminary Project Proposal (Applicant)

Step 2: Final Project Proposal (Applicant)

Step 3: Field Visit & Supporting Documents (Staff)

### **STEP 1: PRELIMINARY PROJECT PROPOSAL**

To begin the standard grant process, applicants are required to submit a Preliminary Project Proposal via RAPTR (the Resources Agency Tracking and Reporting System) to the California Natural Resources Agency.

Applicants with competitive eligible Preliminary Project Proposals will be invited to submit a full Final Project Proposal. Incomplete or non-compliant Preliminary Project Proposals may be eliminated from the competitive process.

### **STEP 2: FINAL PROJECT PROPOSAL**

Applicants invited to the next phase (Step 2) will be asked to submit a Final Project Proposal via RAPTR to the California Natural Resources Agency. Applicants will work with TNBS Grant Staff to schedule a presentation on the information requested within the Step 2 package.

Presentations may be in-person or virtual at the discretion and availability of the applicant and TNBS Grant Staff. Grant Staff will strive for maximum flexibility to accommodate applicant needs.

### **STEP THREE (IF APPLICABLE) – SITE VISIT AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

Applicants with the most competitive projects after Step 2 scoring will be advanced for final project evaluation for award recommendation. These projects may be required to submit further supporting documentation.

As applicable, staff may request a field visit and/or follow-up conversations with the applicant during Step 3. At the field visit or during meetings, applicants should be prepared to respond to project-specific questions including, but not limited to, the cost estimate, funding, site plan, project goals, site control, community involvement, operations and maintenance, sustainability, partnerships, transportation, and any possible barriers to completion.

#### **Where can I submit the grant application?**

All materials should be submitted via the RAPTR system (via the Resources Agency Tracking and Reporting-RAPTR System) to the California Natural Resources Agency. Refer to the application timeline below for key deadlines.

- RAPTR Portal: <https://raptr.resources.ca.gov/>
- If you are new to RAPTR, please review the [User's Guide for Grant Applicants](#) prior to registration and logging in.

If unable to submit via RAPTR, please contact the TNBS Team at [tribalaffairs@resources.ca.gov](mailto:tribalaffairs@resources.ca.gov).

#### **How much can a grant request?**

Ancestral Land Return grants:

- Minimum award amount is \$1,000,000
- Maximum award amount is total available grant funds

Escrow-Ready grants:

- No minimum
- Maximum award amount is total available grant funds

#### **What documents does the Step 1 proposal require?**

All project types will require Project Proposal Form, Signed Notice of Funding Requirements, Work Plan and Timeline, Cost Estimate/Budget, Willing Seller Letter, Property Data Sheet, and Signed Letter or Resolution from the chairperson of the tribe(s) that are actively supported by the application. Templates and instructions can be found in the Tribal Nature-Based Solutions grant guidelines document. Please note that qualifying/final proposals may be asked to submit additional supporting documentation.

## **How will the grant be evaluated and scored?**

Applications will be evaluated by how closely the proposed project meets statutory requirements, funding priorities, and program objectives. Projects will be evaluated using established criteria and any additional funding considerations.

The State reserves the right to utilize the following considerations in the review of proposals, including, but not limited to, best value, regional distribution, project type, and likelihood of success.

Please see Appendix E-Step 1 Eligibility Check and Step 2 Scoring Rubric within the final grant guidelines.

## **What is the application timeline?**

- Solicitation Opens\*: February 13, 2026
- Step 1 Application and Escrow Ready Application due: April 15, 2026
- Invitation to Step 2: May 29, 2026
- Step 2 Application Due: August 29, 2026
- Step 3 Site Visits (if applicable): Early September through Mid-October 2026
- Award Announcement: November 23, 2026

*\*This is when RAPTR Submission portal will begin accepting application submissions. Applicants are welcome to begin preparing application materials as soon as guidelines are published.*

## **Where can I get assistance for this grant application?**

The California Natural Resources Agency will conduct online workshops and host office hours for technical assistance to apply for this program. A list of office hours, workshop dates and times will be posted on the California Natural Resources Agency website at:

<https://resources.ca.gov/Initiatives/Tribalaffairs/TribalNatureBasedSolutionsProgram>

## **Can one apply for this grant even if they have other funding or plan to apply for other funding resources (ex: federal grants)?**

Yes. Priority will be given to projects with secured partial funding (from other state, federal, tribal, philanthropic, donated, or private funds) and can demonstrate requested TNBS funds will fund whole project.

In addition, priority and higher scores will be awarded to escrow ready projects that include or can demonstrate: completion of escrow-ready documents (see above and Funding Priorities within the TNBS Grant Guidelines for further information).

## **How much funding is available?**

There is approximately \$9.2 million dollars total available for the 2026 Tribal Nature-Based Solutions Climate Bond solicitation. CNRA reserves the right to modify these allocations based on the types of funding available.

## **What is encumbrance?**

To encumber means to restrict or essentially “lock in” funds that are awarded for a specific project. In other words, encumbrance refers to the State having committed the funding at issue via a grant or contract.

TNBS Climate Bond Funds are available for encumbrance until June 30, 2028.

This grant program may have limited funding available for escrow ready multi-benefit ancestral land return projects that are partially funded and can demonstrate requested grant funds will complete acquisition at Fair Market Value. Escrow ready projects will need to encumber funds by March 31, 2027, close escrow by July 30, 2027, expend funds by January 1, 2029, and submit all final invoices by March 31, 2029.

## **Is match funding required to be eligible for this grant?**

There is no “match” requirement to participate.

## **What is CEQA and Will My Project Trigger it for State or Local Agencies?**

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires government agencies to consider the environmental consequences of their actions (including their funding decisions related to certain projects) before approving those actions. The CEQA Guidelines (see link below) explain how to determine whether a decision to approve a project will trigger environmental review, what steps are involved in the environmental review process, and the required content of environmental documents.

CNRA requires its grantees to help it identify required environmental review and undertake that review on its behalf as part of any funding decision or approval. CNRA will independently evaluate environmental analysis and evidence supporting it when determining whether and to what extent CEQA is triggered.

Generally, even if a funding decision could trigger CEQA, CNRA will consider whether the decision is exempt from CEQA as a first step. There are two types of CEQA exemptions: (1) statutory exemptions and (2) categorical exemptions. CNRA encourages all applicants to review the Governor’s “cutting green tape” initiative, Public Resources Code section 21080.56, and CEQA 202 Webinar Series: Exemptions (see links below).

Please refer to the resources below to learn more about CEQA. If you have questions about whether funding a particular project or plan would be exempt, you are encouraged to reach out to CNRA grant managers.

### **CEQA Resources:**

- Complete CEQA Guidelines Handbook at  
[https://www.califaep.org/statute\\_and\\_guidelines.php](https://www.califaep.org/statute_and_guidelines.php)
- Getting Started with CEQA by Office of Planning and Research at  
<https://opr.ca.gov/ceqa/getting-started/>

- Cutting the Green Tape: CEQA and Restoration Permitting Tools at <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Watersheds/Cutting-Green-Tape> 7 Last Updated 1/02/2024
- CEQA 101 at [https://opr.ca.gov/ceqa/docs/20210809-CEQA\\_101.pdf](https://opr.ca.gov/ceqa/docs/20210809-CEQA_101.pdf)
- CEQA 202 Series Webinar: What is a “Project” Under CEQA at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iNuDI5IEv9Q&t=1s>
- CEQA 202 Webinar Series: Exemptions at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zVD5zjFcxc8>

### **Will my project require a limited waiver of sovereign immunity?**

Federally recognized tribes will be required to provide limited waivers of sovereign immunity as a condition of accepting the TNBS Climate Bond grant funds.

The grant agreement will identify these important terms and conditions. You can find a copy of our standard grant agreement language in APPENDIX P – ANCESTRAL LAND RETURN GRANT AGREEMENT TEMPLATE.

CNRA recognizes the serious nature of requesting a limited waiver of sovereign immunity and is committed to working collaboratively with California Native American tribes on tailoring limited waiver of sovereign immunity terms to support tribal priorities while also meeting the state's legal obligations in administering bond funds and funds derived from public tax dollars.

### **Is any construction or development allowed on land purchased with CNRA grant funds?**

The TNBS program allows grantees to identify future proposed development on acquired properties in their application. Proposed development must be consistent with and not impede the proposed nature-based solutions projects.

Development must also be designed in such a way to reduce environmental impacts and support environmental health and the protection of natural and cultural resources. Grantees will be asked to affirmatively demonstrate how any proposed development will meet these standards.

Though not a requirement for project eligibility, the TNBS Climate Bond Grant program encourages grantees to propose developments **equal to or less than 10% of the total property acreage**. Projects proposing and committing to no more than 10% development on the property will be considered more competitive and this will be reflected in points awarded to projects invited to apply. Note, because applicants who commit to maintaining development areas equal to or less than 10% of the total property acreage will receive larger priority points in the scoring of applications, any changes to the proposed acreage development later in the application or award process may result in project disqualification.

See APPENDIX G – ELIGIBLE COSTS for more information.

### **Is it permissible to live on the land?**

(See above) There are no restrictions on people living or camping on the property as long as it does not violate the necessary conservation protections and the nature-based solutions that will be implemented.

Further, some permanent housing development on acquired lands is **allowable** but **not fundable** by these grant funds. However, housing with a clear tie to the proposed nature-based solution goals are **allowable** and **fundable** by these grant funds. Permanent housing plans will need to be discussed with the TNBS Grant Team prior to submitting a Step 2 proposal and the scope and scale of what will be permissible on acquired lands must be consistent with those discussions.

### **If I apply on behalf of a tribe, can I transfer the ownership and management of that application to the tribe during the selection process or the grant execution process?**

Non-tribal entities may support a tribe in applying to the program, but the final grant agreement itself will need to be with the tribe that the application is supporting to enforce the terms and conditions of the grant and requirements for deed restriction.

The application cannot transfer from one legal entity to another prior to the execution of the grant. Personnel changes that result in a different contact person or manager within the original entity that submitted the application are permitted. Applicants should endeavor to notify Grant Staff of any changes as soon as reasonable to prevent any delays in vital grant communications.

### **Will there be any further funding rounds for this grant program?**

TNBS Staff anticipate this will be a highly competitive solicitation cycle. For future solicitation cycles, additional funds would need to be appropriated via California Legislature.

### **Can the project scope, purpose, or funding request change during the grant application process?**

Applicants are highly encouraged to prioritize projects for which they are confident in the project scope, need, and approximate budget. Changes to the project scope, purpose, or funding request may be considered on a case-by-case basis; however, CNRA reserves the right to deny applications based on changes. To maintain the integrity of the competitive scoring process, projects with significant changes to the scope, purpose, or funding request after submittal of the Step 2 package are more likely to be denied. *Please note, CNRA cannot award additional funds that are in excess of the original estimate.*

### **Some helpful things to consider when submitting your application:**

#### **DO**

- Provide proof of project support from collaborating Tribe(s)

- Respond to each proposal prompt in the program guidelines and application template with enough detail and clarity that someone unfamiliar with the project can follow and understand.
- Stay within the character limits for each question. Spaces do not count as characters. Information provided beyond the character limits will not be read or considered.
- Utilize the same font and font size consistently throughout the application for clarity and ease of reading.
- Closely align your project goals with the nature-based solutions identified in the [Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy](#) and/or the [Pathways 30 x 30 Strategy](#).
- Label application attachments as they are referenced in the Step 1 and 2 Guidelines checklists.
- Make sure your cost estimates are clear with supporting documentation.
  - *We understand that particularly in the earlier stages of a project, it's not always possible to provide a completely accurate cost estimate. If you are making a rough estimate, please provide a conservative value, the information used to determine the rough estimate, and which resources will be used at a later date to refine the estimate. Please note, CNRA cannot award additional funds that are in excess of the original estimate.*
- Provide documentation of any pursued or existing partial funding.
  - Please indicate other grant programs you are applying for that may complete the funding request when combined with the TNBS request.
  - *Note, other grant funds that have been applied for, but not yet awarded, do not count for partial funding.*
- If submitting multiple applications, please list each project name and specify which project is prioritized by the tribe.
- Provide a secondary point of contact and/or update CNRA in the event that the point of contact changes.

## **DO NOT**

- Request funding in excess of the maximum amount permitted in the guidelines.
- Request funding for property acquisitions in excess of Fair Market Value (even if applicant is only seeking fair market value or less from the TNBS Program).
- Include any sensitive information regarding sacred sites, artifacts, etc. that you wouldn't want released to the public.
- Exceed specified character limits in your application.
- Include aspects of multiple projects in one proposal.
- Include any cash reserves, endowments, or fundraising activities (including applying to alternate grants \*note that general grant-capacity building is an eligible cost however).

For more information on eligible and ineligible activities, please consult Appendix G-Eligible Costs.

## **Stay Connected**

[Sign up here](#) to receive quarterly updates from CNRA. If you have any additional suggestions or comments or feedback please submit them to [tribalaffairs@resources.ca.gov](mailto:tribalaffairs@resources.ca.gov).