



San Joaquin Valley
AIR POLLUTION CONTROL DISTRICT



2023 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Shafter Community Emissions Reduction
Program: Vegetative Barriers

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is seeking proposals from entities to implement Vegetative Barriers projects in the Shafter AB 617 Community.

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Request for Proposals

Shafter Community Emissions Reduction Program: Vegetative Barriers

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (District) is soliciting proposals from entities (applicants) to implement Vegetative Barrier projects in the Shafter AB 617 Community boundaries. This Request for Proposal (RFP) will provide a total grant amount of up to \$1,000,000 to the selected applicant(s) that can demonstrate the ability to efficiently and effectively implement vegetative barriers projects by working with the community to reduce emissions and to provide several key co-benefits. The Vegetative Barriers Emissions Reduction Program is a Community Identified Project that has been included and prioritized in the California Air Resources Board (CARB) and District adopted Community Emission Reduction Program (CERP).

Introduction

Assembly Bill 617 (AB 617) requires CARB and air districts to develop and implement additional emissions reporting, monitoring, reduction plans and emission reduction measures in an effort to reduce air pollution exposure in disadvantaged communities. Shafter is one of the San Joaquin Valley (Valley) communities selected by CARB for investment of additional resources under AB 617.

AB 617 provides mechanisms and resources to invest substantial funding in the community through voluntary incentive funding measures. Most importantly, these measures are guided by the shared experience and knowledge of local community members, through their input and involvement on Steering Committees for each AB 617-selected community.

Background

The Vegetative Barriers Emission Reduction Program is a part of California Climate Investments (CCI), a statewide initiative that puts billions of Cap-and-Trade dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health and the environment – particularly in disadvantaged communities.

Vegetative Barriers projects use natural solutions to mitigate air quality impacts and improve public health. Projects may include planting trees or vegetative barriers in the community in order to reduce exposure to emissions and provide several key co-benefits.

Vegetative barriers, also known as windbreaks, are composed of one or more rows of trees or shrubs that may be planted in specific areas of concern in order to improve air quality in the immediate area by intercepting airborne particles, dust, chemicals, and odors. Pollutants directly emitted from cars, trucks, and other motor vehicles are found in higher concentrations near major roads. In addition, stationary sources such as industrial facilities, factories, and agricultural operations can also contribute air pollutants to their surrounding areas. While various emission control techniques and programs exist

to reduce these pollutants from mobile and stationary sources, vegetative barriers have been shown to be an additional measure to potentially reduce a population's exposure to air pollution through the interception of airborne particles and the uptake of gaseous pollutants. Examples of vegetative barriers include trees, bushes, shrubs, or a mix of these.

Generally, a higher and thicker vegetative barrier with full coverage will result in greater reductions in downwind pollutant concentrations. In addition to air quality benefits, vegetative barriers can improve aesthetics, increase property values, reduce heat, control surface water runoff, and reduce noise pollution. Factors to be considered when designing Vegetative Barriers include, but are not limited to, vegetation height, thickness, porosity, seasonal effects, vegetation air emissions (e.g. biogenic VOCs), pollution and stress resistance. Additional considerations include: soil characteristics, availability of water, control of water runoff, maintenance of the vegetative barrier, use of native and non-invasive species, and roadway safety. A full list of design considerations can be found in **Exhibit C - EPA's Recommendations for Constructing Roadside Vegetation Barriers to Improve Near-Road Air Quality**, it is also available at https://19january2017snapshot.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-08/documents/recommendations_for_constructing_roadside_vegetation_barriers_to_improve_near-road_air_quality.pdf

Qualitative Benefits

Vegetative Barriers can shade buildings and reduce energy consumption by lessening the load on air conditioning systems. When planting and maintaining native and/or drought-resistant vegetation using water efficient irrigation methods, vegetative barriers can reduce water usage. In addition, planting more trees in certain areas, such as near freeways, may also help reduce noise pollution. The Steering Committee has suggested installing vegetative barriers on the perimeters of agricultural operations to reduce dust and, between local rail routes and residential areas.

Community Support for Vegetative Barriers

Community engagement continues to be an important part of the CERP development. While this measure was not initially funded in the CERP, through ongoing discussions with the Shafter CSC, members decided to reallocate funds to support this measure. District staff has met with the Community Steering Committee (CSC) subcommittee to solicit feedback on how to implement vegetative barriers in the community. This RFP was developed and modeled after existing plans and resources for similar projects within the state of California and includes feedback received from the CSC to create a program that addresses the unique needs of the community.

Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>
TBA	Release Request for Proposal

TBA	Applicant Workshop
TBA	Proposal submission deadline
Approximately 90 days	Proposal review and Final selection by District staff

Funding Available

The total funding available for the Vegetative Barriers Emission Reduction Program is \$1,000,000 for projects within the Shafter AB 617 Community.

The applicant must be in compliance with applicable State and/or federal conflict of interest laws. To be eligible to receive incentive funding, the applicant **must** agree to disclose additional funding sources that include, but are not limited to, federal, state, and third-party private sources as follows:

1. Indicate if their organization has applied for or received funding from any other sources for this project.
2. Indicate if you intend to apply for additional funding from other sources in the future for this project.
3. Disclose the value of any current financial incentive that directly reduces the project cost including tax credits or deductions or other public financial assistance.

For any additional funding that the applicant will receive or has already received for this project, the applicant will submit copies of letter(s) of financial commitment(s), agreement(s), or grant award letter(s). Information provided may be shared as required by federal, state, and local laws. Any owner, designee, or other third party who is found to have submitted multiple applications or signed multiple contracts for this project without proper disclosure may be disqualified from funding for that project from all sources within the control of the District. Applying for or receiving funding from other sources for this project does not necessarily preclude you from this RFP.

Projects funded through existing initiatives within the community may be leveraged to expand existing projects in the Shafter AB 617 community. Applicants may use the grant awarded to them as leverage to raise matching funds for Vegetative Barriers projects. Match funding is not required for this program.

Contract Period

Applicants selected through this RFP are required to commit to their projects for a minimum of 10 years. The project implementation phase shall be completed within the first three (3) years of the contract execution date. During the contract period, Applicants must maintain the project, comply with other requirements described in this RFP, and make the project available for inspection if requested by District and/or CARB staff.

Applicant Eligibility

Applicants must meet the following criteria:

1. Applicant must be a joint powers authority, special district, non-profit, tribal government, or public agency and have the necessary experience or can work with project partners with the experience to implement vegetative barrier projects within the selected AB 617 community.
2. Applicant must be the property owner or have documented authority from the property owner on which the project will be implemented;
3. Applicant must commit to implementing the project within three years of contract execution date and maintaining trees planted as part of the project for the remaining portion of the contract period. The contract will be ten (10) years from the date of execution. This includes having a commitment to irrigate trees, and tree maintenance, up to and including removal and replacement of dead trees;
4. Applicant must commit to making the project available for inspection if requested by the District or CARB staff during the entire contract period, which will be ten (10) years;
5. Applicant must contact the local County Agricultural Commissioner's Office before obtaining any plant material originating from outside the respective county to ensure all the requirements for movement of plant material into the respective county are met;
6. Applicant must ensure that trees are purchased, planted, and maintained to the specifications provided in Appendix H *Tree Selection, Planting, and Care Specifications* of the CAL Fire Urban and Community Forestry Grant Guidelines.¹
7. Applicant shall, provide public access to the project where feasible.
8. Applicant shall obtain any required permits necessary for successful project completion;
9. Applicant must ensure that all work performed is in conformance with the California Environmental Quality Act and all other applicable statutes, rules, and regulations.
10. Applicant and project partner(s) must have financial capacity to complete, operate, and maintain the project. If the Applicant is unable to carry the financial responsibility of a reimbursement program on their own, they may partner with a local public agency or 501(c)(3) non-profit.
11. Applicant must ensure that all property taxes where the Vegetative Barrier project will be located are current at the time of application.
12. Applicant must ensure that any funds required from other sources are reasonably expected to be available in the time frame needed to carry out the project.

Project Eligibility

The following criteria are based on the adopted community CERP. Applicants are encouraged to review the resources provided in Exhibit D as they prepare their proposals.

1. All projects must be located within the Shafter Community boundaries and meet eligibility requirements described in this RFP.
2. Required species selection for the projects
 - a. Non-Invasive

- b. Non-Poisonous
 - c. Roadway safety conformity (where applicable)
 - d. Maximize GHG reductions
 - e. Low-biogenic volatile organic compound (BVOC) emitting
 - f. Minimize allergenic pollen
3. Vegetation Characteristics – The following plant characteristics should be considered when making species selection. A full detailed description of vegetation characteristics can be found in **Exhibit C**.
 - a. Seasonal Effects
 - b. Leaf Surface
 - c. Air Emissions
 - d. Pollution and Stress Resistance
4. Payments will be made on a **reimbursement** basis. The Grantee pays for services, products, and supplies, then submits invoices and proof of payment, and is then reimbursed.
 - a. The following costs are **eligible** for funding:
 - i. Supplies and materials
 - ii. Labor and construction of the project such as removal of materials and equipment, installation of trees, and other approved items
 - iii. Contracted services related to the project
 - iv. Signs and interpretive aids communicating information about the project
 - v. On-going project maintenance for the continued health of the project trees
 - vi. Up to 25% of the grant request may be budgeted for non-construction costs, including but not limited to design, permitting, outreach, and direct project administration and management.
 - vii. Up to 10% may be budgeted for contingency costs
 - viii. The grant amount will cover up to 100% of eligible costs
 - b. The following costs are **ineligible** to receive funding:
 - i. Overhead (i.e., rent, utilities, office equipment/supplies)

Project Evaluation and Scoring Criteria

Applications received by the District will be distributed to District staff and the Shafter CSC, who will work in partnership to evaluate and score the projects according to the scoring criteria described in Table 1 below. A meeting with the CSC will be scheduled after the conclusion of the RFP period to present and rank the submitted proposals. The scoring criteria and points, which were developed in partnership with the Shafter CSC, are meant to inform the decision-making process. Several of these criteria were based off of the CCI Urban Greening Guidelinesⁱⁱ and additional scoring criteria were added at the request of the sub-committee.

Table 1 – Scoring Criteria

Criteria	Points Available
Cost-Effectiveness - \$/ton GHG reduced	0-30
Qualitative Benefits - Proximity to sensitive populations - Proximity to buildings to reduce energy costs - Proximity to sidewalks to shade well-traveled areas - Proximity to areas suggested by the CSC	0-25
Co-benefits - Criteria air pollutant emission reductions - Water and energy savings	0-25
Species Selection - Types of species of trees and plants - Environmental benefits of the species selected - Consideration of initial size selection for the planting area to ensure the best chance for survival and growth	0-10
Project Readiness - Timeliness of project implementation - Leveraging existing efforts in the community - Availability of external funding	0-10

During the selection process, the District and the CSC may wish to follow up with some Applicants for clarification purposes only. No new material will be permitted at this time. Additional information provided during the bid review process is limited to clarification by the Applicant of information presented in the proposal upon request by the District and the CSC.

The determination shall be based solely on the Evaluation Criteria contained in the RFP, on evidence provided in the proposal and on any other evidence provided during the bid review process.

The District will report program information in accordance with Community Air Protection program guidelines available at:

https://ww3.arb.ca.gov/msprog/cap/docs/cap_incentives_2019_guidelines.pdf.

Location

The rural community of Shafter in Kern County has a current estimated population of over 19,000 residents. Geographically this community is bounded by Merced Avenue to the north, the Calloway canal and Cherry Avenue to the east, Orange Street to the south, and Scaroni Avenue to the west. This area does not encompass the entire boundaries of the

City of Shafter but the core, along with the small community of Smith Corner to the south, as well as the nearby rural areas surrounding the area. The City of Shafter includes businesses, schools, and residential areas.

The project(s) to be implemented through this RFP **must be** within the boundaries of the AB 617-selected community of Shafter.

The following are suggested areas by the Shafter CSC that would benefit from Vegetative Barriers projects:

- Shafter Ave and Elizabeth Ave
- Burbank Street
Beech Ave and Big John Street
- Mannel Ave
- Fresno Ave & Mannel Ave, intersection by Sequoia Elementary School
- Burbank Street
From Santa Fe Hwy to Poplar Avenue
- Beech Ave./Hwy 43
From San Diego Avenue to Los Angeles Street.
- Around the Colony
Big John Road
Mannel Avenue from Burbank Street to San Diego Avenue
San Diego Avenue from Mannel Avenue to S. Shafter Avenue
- S. Shafter Avenue
From San Diego Avenue to the field beyond Riverside Avenue
- Orange Avenue
From Santa Fe Hwy to Poplar Avenue
- Riverside Avenue
From Santa Fe Hwy to Poplar Avenue
- 7th Standard Avenue

Emission Reductions

Various California state and institutional bodies have developed tools to help estimate the GHG reductions and co-benefits associated with Vegetative Barriers projects. The methodology and referenced tools below are consistent with the Quantification

Methodology developed for the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) Urban Greening Grant Program under the California Climate Investments Program.

All Vegetative Barriers project calculations can be performed in the Benefits Calculator Tool, a workbook, which has been developed by CARB for the CNRA.ⁱⁱⁱ Project Applicants need to fill out data within two tabs in this workbook in order to quantify emissions and co-benefits. Applicants must fill out tabs “Project Info,” and “Tree Planting – ITP.” The tab “Tree Planting – ITS” should not be filled out (The “Tree Planting – ITS” tab is designed for an alternative input tab for use with alternative software that is no longer supported). Tab “New Bike-Ped Infrastructure” should not be completed, as new bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure is not included in the Vegetative Barriers Program Plan.

In order to fill out all the information as prompted in the spreadsheet, project Applicants will also need to use three external tools, as follows:

- University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources (UCANR) Water Use Classification of Landscape Species (WUCOLS IV) tool^{7iv}
- California Department of Water Resources (DWR) Water Budget Workbook^{8v}
- i-Tree Planting Tool^{9vi}

A guide detailing how to use each of these tools can be found in Exhibit B.

Proposal Requirements and Process

Applicants must submit a completed application (Exhibit A) and requested supplemental documents listed in this RFP to the District prior to the RFP deadline. Incomplete proposals or proposals arriving after the deadline will be automatically disqualified from consideration.

Eligible entities will submit applications that include the required information as described in this RFP. A certification section is included in the application and details applicant requirements. Participation occurs in several phases:

1. Applicants must submit the following documents in response to this RFP:
 - a. Completed Application, with no fields left blank;
 - i. Applicants may submit answers to Section 3 of the application on a separate document so long as the proposal answers each question in the order presented in the application and the responses are numbered accordingly.
 - b. Completed Certifications Form section, signed by applicant;
 - c. First page of IRS Form W-9;
 - d. Completed California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) Draft Urban Greening Benefits Calculator Tool and provide copies of the “GHG Summary” tab and “Co-benefit Summary” tab;
 - e. Dated and itemized quote(s) for the project costs; and
 - f. Photographs of the project site, an aerial photo of the project from an online resource, and a representation of the project plan area (i.e., site plan).

2. Once the RFP period has ended, the District and the CSC will review applications received and contact Applicants as necessary to gather additional information. The District will aim to respond to prospective Applicants within 90 days following the end of the RFP period to alert them if their projects have been selected to receive funding. However, this timeline may be extended at the discretion of the District and CSC (e.g. to reach consensus from the CSC).
3. Upon CSC consensus, applications selected for funding will be processed by District Staff and a contract will be offered to the applicant. Once both parties have agreed to sign the contract, the applicant will be notified of the contract execution, at which point Applicants may then commence work on the project. Project expenses cannot be incurred prior to contract execution. In the event that the District and the selected applicant(s) cannot agree to a contract, the District reserves the right to award the grant to the next qualified applicant(s) or close this solicitation.
4. Claim for Payments may be submitted for partial/progress payments for reimbursement throughout the project implementation period and up to 90-days following the completion of the project implementation period. A complete Claim for Payment packet is required as part of the reimbursement process and must include, but is not limited to, the invoice(s) and receipts for the services performed and materials purchased, and proof of payment for all expenses. During this time, District inspectors will inspect and take photos of the project site. District staff will review submitted claim packets and reimburse for eligible costs, up to the approved contract amount.

Proposal Submittal

All proposals must be submitted to the District according to specifications set forth in this RFP. Failure to adhere to these specifications may be cause for rejection of proposal.

Signature – All proposals shall be signed by an authorized representative of the Applicant.

Due Date – All proposals are due no later than 5:00 PM, TBA, and should be directed to:

David Lopez
Supervising Air Quality Specialist
San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District
1990 E. Gettysburg Ave
Fresno, CA 93726-0244
Email: grants@valleyair.org
Subject: Shafter Vegetative Barriers Application

Late Proposals – Late proposals will not be accepted under any circumstances.

Grounds for Rejection – A proposal may be immediately rejected if:

- It is not prepared in the required format, or

- It is signed by an individual not authorized to represent the firm, or
- It is not signed.

Modification or Withdrawal – Once submitted, proposals cannot be altered without the prior written consent of the District. All proposals shall constitute firm offers and may not be withdrawn for a period of ninety (90) days following the last day to accept proposals.

Administration

1. Cost of Developing Application

The Applicant is responsible for the cost of developing an Application, and this cost cannot be charged to the District. In addition, the District is not liable for any costs incurred during environmental review or as a result of withdrawing a proposed award or canceling the solicitation.

2. Errors

If an Applicant discovers any ambiguity, conflict, discrepancy, omission, or other error in the solicitation, the Applicant shall immediately notify the District of such error in writing and request modification or clarification of the document. The District shall not be responsible for failure to correct errors.

3. Immaterial Defect

The District may waive any immaterial defect or deviation contained in an Applicant's application. The District's waiver shall in no way modify the Application or excuse the successful Applicant from full compliance.

4. Disposition of Applicant's Documents

Pursuant to the District's Procurement Policy and Procedure, the District reserves the right to reject any or all proposals. On the date that the Agreement is signed, all applications and related material submitted in response to this solicitation become a part of the property of the District and public record.

5. Applicant's Admonishment

This solicitation contains the instructions governing the requirements for funding projects submitted by interested Applicants, including the format in which the information is to be submitted, the material to be included, the requirements that must be met to be eligible for consideration, and Applicant responsibilities. Applicants must take the responsibility to carefully read the entire solicitation, ask appropriate questions in a timely manner, submit the application with all required responses in a complete manner by the required date and time, and make sure that all procedures and requirements of the solicitation are followed and appropriately addressed.

6. Agreement Requirements

The content of this solicitation and each grant Recipient's application shall be incorporated by reference into a final grant agreement. The District reserves the right to negotiate with Applicants to modify the project scope, the level of funding,

or both. If the District is unable to successfully negotiate and execute a funding agreement with an Applicant, the District, at its sole discretion, reserves the right to withdraw the pending award and fund the next highest ranked eligible project. This does not limit the District's ability to withdraw a proposed award for other reasons, including for no cause.

7. No Agreement Until Signed

No agreement between the District and the successful Applicant is in effect until the agreement is signed by the Recipient and signed by the authorized District representative. Costs are only subject to reimbursement by the District after execution; no costs incurred prior to execution of the agreement are reimbursable.

8. No Modifications to the General Provisions

Because time is of the essence, if an Applicant at any time, including after Preliminary Grantee Selection, attempts to negotiate, or otherwise seeks modification of, the application or proposed award, the District may reject an application or withdraw a proposed award.

9. Payment of Prevailing Wages

If applicable, all Applicants must read and pay particular attention to prevailing wages and labor compliance. Prevailing wage rates can be significantly higher than non-prevailing wage rates. Failure to pay legally-required prevailing wage rates can result in substantial damages and financial penalties, termination of the grant agreement, disruption of projects, and other complications.

10. Solicitation Cancellation and Amendments

The District reserves the right to cancel this solicitation, revise the amount of funds available under this solicitation, amend this solicitation as needed, and reject any or all applications received in response to this solicitation.

Insurance

The selected applicant(s) is required to maintain sufficient insurance, licenses, or other required certifications for the type of work being performed. The District may require specific insurance coverage be established and maintained during the course of the work and as a condition of award or continuation of contract.

Reporting Requirements

All projects that receive funding under this program must comply with the requirements described in Section H of Chapter 3 in the Community Air Protection Incentives 2019 Guidelines^{vii}. This will involve the preparation of Semi-annual and Yearly Reports, which the District will prepare based on information collected from the selected Applicant(s). Applicant(s) must ensure that project-related information is complete, correct, supported by documentation, and supplied to the District upon request for the preparation of the reports. Some of the information to be included in these reports is described below:

- Project information, including but not limited to the following:

- Location information.
- Priority population identification, if applicable.
- Approach for identifying beneficial projects (e.g. outreach efforts, community-based organization letters, etc.).
- Project benefits (e.g. reduction of emissions, greater mobility, etc.).
- Program-level information, including but not limited to the following:
 - Employment benefits and outcomes (jobs).
 - Public transparency and outreach events (outreach).
- Status of projects and funds for each grant year of CAP incentives
- A list of any projects identified as nonperforming and a brief narrative of any related enforcement actions

The above is not an exhaustive list of reporting requirements for the selected Applicant(s) in this program and the District will work with the Applicant(s) to ensure that the required data and information are collected for the reports. For more information, please refer to the Community Air Protection Incentives 2019 Guidelines.

Informational Meeting

The District will host an informational meeting to address questions from Applicants interested in submitting a proposal. This meeting is open to the public and simultaneous interpretation will be provided upon request. Attendance at the informational meeting is NOT a requirement for submitting a proposal.

The information meeting will be held on TBA

Please email the District's contact person below to RSVP for this RFP informational meeting.

Contact Person

All questions concerning this RFP and application submittals should be directed to:

David Lopez
Supervising Air Quality Specialist
San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District
1990 E. Gettysburg Ave
Fresno, CA 93726-0244
Phone (559) 230-5961
Email: David.Lopez@valleyair.org

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- ⁱ Appendix H, CAL FIRE Urban and Community Forestry Grant Guidelines. Available at: https://www.fire.ca.gov/media/9653/cal-fire-ucf-cci-2019-20_grant-guidelines_final.pdf#page=54
Accessed: March 2021.
- ⁱⁱ Urban Greening Program Final Guidelines. Available at: <https://resources.ca.gov/grants/urban-greening/>
Accessed: February 2021.
- ⁱⁱⁱ CARB Urban Greening Calculator Tool (Version 3). Available at: <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/resources/documents/cci-quantification-benefits-and-reporting-materials?corr>
Accessed: February 2021.
- ^{iv} WUCOLS IV Database. Available at <https://ucanr.edu/sites/WUCOLS/> Accessed: February 2021.
- ^v DWR Water Budget Workbook. Available at: <https://cadwr.app.box.com/s/5k39tv10u42rp5bn2uebd7fodkxzgve7>
Accessed: February 2021.
- ^{vi} i-Tree Planting Calculator v2.1.2. Available at: <https://planting.itreetools.org/> Accessed: February 2021.
- ^{vii} Community Air Protection Incentives 2019 Guidelines. Available at: https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2020-10/cap_incentives_2019_guidelines_final_rev_10_14_2020_0.pdf

Exhibit A

Vegetative Barriers Application Here

Exhibit B

**Vegetative Barriers Tool – User Guide
Here**

Exhibit C

Helpful Resources Here