



**COLORADO**

# **WATER FUNDING GUIDE**



**SECOND EDITION**

# INTRODUCTION

The Ditch and Reservoir Company Alliance (DARCA) works closely with irrigators and other water providers in regards to advocacy, resource accessibility, and as a network, for organizations to provide additional support. Irrigators have indicated that they need additional support to overcome challenges such as a lack of capacity to create a multi-benefit project, write and manage grants and other funding streams, and navigate system modernization with all the challenges that a ditch company may face.

River Network, a sponsor and partner of DARCA, found similar challenges that arose in their stream management planning and other projects. In response to this need, River Network launched a two-year pilot program to provide agricultural organizations with irrigation resources.

The second edition of this funding guide provides updated resources to irrigators, DARCA members, and stakeholders. This revamped resource allows ditch, reservoir, or irrigation company or stakeholder the opportunity to easily access resources for additional capacity building and to gather ways to take a project from a single benefit to multi-benefit that also modernizes the system to cut down on maintenance costs while creating many benefits to the overall system.

We know how challenging the grant process is. Please reach out to Amber Weber, DARCA Executive Director if you need any assistance.

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# APPLICATION TIPS

## GRANTS MADE EASY IN NINE SIMPLE STEPS

**01.** Think about the project you need done and match your needs with the available funds. It is sometimes helpful to review all grants that can help you complete the project and that align with your needs. Make sure to account for the timelines (when it is due and other necessary dates) as well as other vital information including the match (the contribution you/organization will need to make to “match” the grant funds to create the entire project cost) needed, documents needed, letters of support, etc.

**02.** Once you have a list of all funding sources and supplemental information, prioritize the funding sources based on the timeline, eligibility, needs, length of time a grant will take to complete, etc. It is helpful to weed out grants that are more strenuous for fewer funds. What will align with your needs the best?

**03.** It can be helpful to hire a grant writer or to find someone in the organization who has experience or is a good writer that can team up with the person who knows the most about the project. There needs to be a healthy blend of facts and project information and storytelling about who you are, what you need, and why. Telling a story will really help your grant stand out and will allow you to move further in the selection process. Though you do need to tell a story, don't get lost in the story. Be concise while illustrating your needs.

# APPLICATION TIPS

**04.** Ensure you have all the necessary information. A cost estimate by a board member will not go as far as a direct quote from a contractor. It is a good idea to receive multiple quotes from a variety of companies to cover all bases and project options. Exact numbers can really help the grantor know that you have done your research and know exactly what you need to complete your project. Some grants also require additional studies, reports, letters of support, etc. to receive funding, so make sure you have all information in advance.

**05.** A budget is required for all grants that show how much money you need and where it will be spent. There can be specific rules for each grant so be sure to read carefully to create the best proposal possible. In addition to creating a budget and following the given guidelines, consider inflation of costs that may occur while you complete a project. If a grant will take several years to complete, the cost of materials may go up. For example, a particular project was bid at \$78/sq ft for liner and then by the end of the three years, the price was \$123/sq ft

**06.** Talk to the grantor and attend pre-grant meetings if possible. These provide additional and helpful information to you as the applicant.

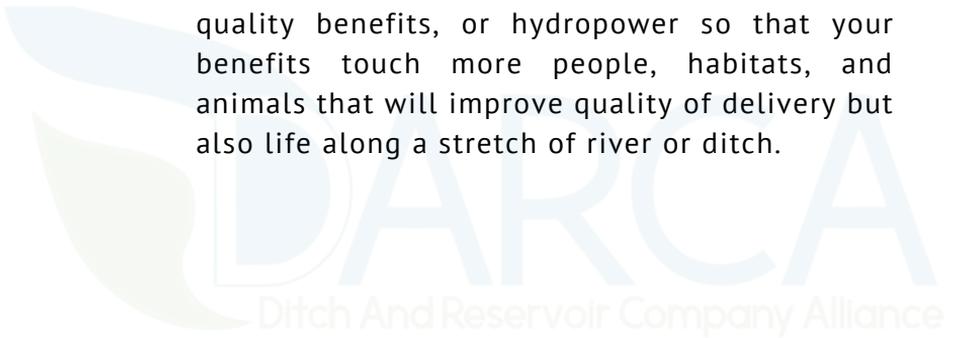
# APPLICATION TIPS

**07.** Matching dollars (see number one for definition) cannot all come from in-kind (you doing the work, donation of equipment, etc.). Some matching will need to be cash, and can also come from other grants and donations. You cannot match a state grant to another state grant unless explicitly stated and confirmed. You can however match other types of grants and donations together to enable the project to move forward with less cash upfront.

**08.** When thinking about match, or expertise needed to make a project happen from start to finish, it can be helpful to think of partners that align with your vision and goal to help with the project. Sometimes firms (engineering and otherwise) can help with your grant writing as well as design, cost analysis, maintenance plans, etc. and can be a great benefit to the project. If you are unsure of where to go or would like a more robust approach, consider checking out partners. A partner can also walk you through permitting, environmental impact studies, etc. which can be a major piece to a project and funding ask. DARCA has a list of sponsors that can be helpful in this process with you. Reach out to the ones that make the most sense for your project and see if partnering can benefit you.

# APPLICATION TIPS

**09.** When putting together your project and funding ask, think about a maintenance plan to keep the project running longer. Also, consider other pieces that can be added to your project to include greater benefit and large-scale support. For example, instead of a simple dam repair, other components can be added for fish passage, trash racks to keep the dam clean and protect habitats, bank stabilization, water quality benefits, or hydropower so that your benefits touch more people, habitats, and animals that will improve quality of delivery but also life along a stretch of river or ditch.



# APPLICATION TIPS

## COMMON LANGUAGE

### MATCHING FUNDS:

Some grants require existing funds from company funding or from other grants to match the investment that will be placed by the grant, there are specific rules to what constitutes matching funds depending on the grant.

### BUDGET

The financial plan for the project or program that the awarding agency or pass-through entity approves during the award process or in subsequent amendments to the awards.

### PASS- THROUGH ENTIY

Funds issued by a federal agency to a state agency or institution are then transferred to other state agencies.

### SCOPE OF WORK

(SOW) is a guiding statement that outlines the focus of the work, checkpoints within the work, how reports will be delivered, and final products that will come about because of the work.

### LETTERS OF SUPPORT

If the application is on behalf of a multi-beneficial project or will receive matching funds from organizations, a letter from that organization outlining their support of the project and grant application is evidence to place into the grant application.

### CLOSE DATE

It is critical to know the timeline of completion for the project and if there is a grace period for project completion. Billing hours appropriately and paying contractors depends on this date.



# REGION SPECIFIC FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The following section identified by the green tab in the top right corner of each page lays out region-specific funding opportunities. These opportunities are often specific to an individual water basin.

Grand

# YAMPA WHITE GREEN BASIN



## YAMPA RIVER FUND

The Yampa River Fund provides sustainable funding for:

- Voluntary, market-based water leases, and releases from reservoirs that enhance river flow.
- Restoration actions that will improve riparian, in-channel, streambank, and aquatic habitats.
- Agriculture infrastructure improvements will generate combined agricultural, environmental, and recreational benefits.

[HTTPS://WWW.YAMPARIVERFUND.ORG/PROJECTS1](https://www.yampariverfund.org/projects1)

# COLORADO BASIN



## THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

The impacts of the Colorado River Basin's long-term drought highlight a need for communities to adapt to a drier future and develop collaborative partnerships, and water management practices that support working lands, healthy rivers and wildlife, and vibrant economies. The Nature Conservancy is actively engaged with agricultural landowners, ditch companies, and irrigation districts across Colorado to support this work through community engagement, science, technical assistance & fundraising capacity.

[HTTPS://WWW.NATURE.ORG/EN-US/ABOUT-US/WHERE-WE-WORK/PRIORITY-LANDSCAPES/COLORADO-RIVER/](https://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/priority-landscapes/colorado-river/)

# GUNNISON BASIN

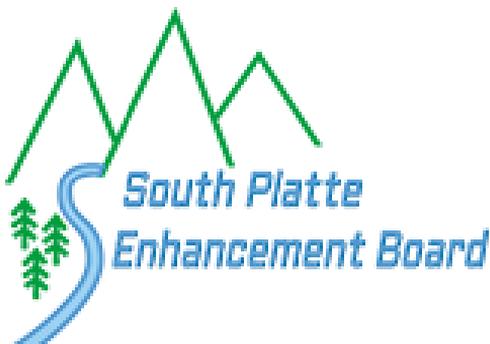


## THE UPPER GUNNISON RIVER WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT GRANT PROGRAM

The Upper Gunnison Conservancy District's mission is to encourage the in-basin beneficial use and maintenance of high-quality standards for the water resources of the basin. The District achieves its purposes and accomplishes its mission by providing financial assistance to persons or entities advancing projects that enhance water supply and stream conditions within the District through a Grant Program. The proposed projects must address a list of criteria laid out by the district, to see the application and more information please see the grant website.

[HTTPS://UGRWCD.ORG/GRANT-FUNDING/](https://ugrwcd.org/grant-funding/)

# SOUTH PLATTE BASIN



## SOUTH PLATTE ENHANCEMENT BOARD

The purpose of the SPPP is to protect river-related resource values identified by the Forest Service while recognizing the reliance of many Colorado Front Range communities on the South Platte River for many uses, including drinking water. The SPEB supports initiatives that protect and enhance the resource values within the Upper South Platte River and the North Fork of the South Platte River. Specific resource values (RVs) identified in the SPPP include fisheries, geologic, historic, and cultural resources, recreation, scenic, and wildlife. The SPEB will also consider funding projects for vegetation management, water quality, and other resource values within the “Eligible Area.” The SPEB may grant funds only for projects that occur within or affect the “Eligible Area” that is accessible to and/or provide public benefit.

[HTTPS://SOUTHPLATTE.ORG/GRANT-PROGRAM/CURRENT-APPLICATION-PACKAGE/](https://southplatte.org/grant-program/current-application-package/)



# STATEWIDE FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The following section identified by the blue tab in the top right corner of each page lays out the statewide funding opportunities here in Colorado. These opportunities are from state government and private entities.



## COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT NON-POINT SOURCE FUNDING

The Non-point Source Program funds projects that help restore and protect water bodies from non-point source pollution impacts, specifically selenium, sediment, pathogens, and/or nutrients. In the past, the program has funded irrigation improvements like converting from flood to sprinklers.

[HTTPS://CDPHE.COLORADO.GOV/NONPOINT-SOURCE-FUNDING-OPPORTUNITIES](https://cdphe.colorado.gov/nonpoint-source-funding-opportunities)



## COLORADO HEALTHY RIVERS

Senate Bill 02-087 allowed Colorado citizens to make a voluntary contribution on their state income tax returns to support local watershed protection efforts in the state through the Colorado Healthy Rivers Fund. The Fund grants money to on-the-ground projects that contribute to cleaner water, healthier wildlife habitat, and improved recreation throughout Colorado and is administered through the Colorado Water Conservation Board in association with the Water Quality Control Division and the Colorado Watershed Assembly.

[HTTPS://WWW.COLORADOWATER.ORG/COLORADO-HEALTHY-RIVERS-FUND-1](https://www.coloradowater.org/colorado-healthy-rivers-fund-1)



## WATER GRANT PLANS

The Colorado Water Conservation Board is a major grantor in Colorado through the management of the Water Plan Grants. The purpose of the Water Plan Grant (WPG) funding is to make progress on the critical actions and measurable objectives identified in the Colorado Water Plan. All grant applications will be assessed based on funds available for a particular Water Plan category.

### **Water Plan Grant program funding categories include:**

- *Water Storage & Supply* - includes the development of additional storage, artificial recharge into aquifers, and dredging of existing reservoirs to restore the reservoirs' full decreed storage capacity for multi-beneficial projects and projects identified in basin implementation plans to address the water supply and demand gap.
- *Water Sharing Agreements* - including projects that meet defined water needs while mitigating impacts associated with traditional water transfers.
- *Conservation & Land Use Planning* - includes long-term strategies for conservation, land use, water efficiency, and drought planning.
- *Engagement & Innovation* - includes water education, outreach, and innovation efforts.
- *Agricultural Projects* - includes technical assistance or project/program funding for agricultural projects.
- *Environmental & Recreation Projects*



## WATER SUPPLY RESERVE FUND

This program provides grants and loans to assist Colorado water users in addressing their critical water supply issues and interests. The funds help eligible entities complete water activities, which may include competitive grants for:

- Technical assistance regarding permitting, feasibility studies and environmental compliance;
- Studies or analysis of structural, nonstructural, consumptive and nonconsumptive water needs, projects or activities; and
- Design of structural projects or activities. Infrastructure replacement or maintenance projects; and
- Activities that promote education, outreach, and innovation consistent with the mission and goals of the Colorado Water Plan

Requests for funds from the WSRF program must be approved by at least one of Colorado's nine basin roundtables. The request is then forwarded to the CWCB to evaluate and make final funding decisions.

[HTTPS://CWCB.COLORADO.GOV/FUNDING/WATER-SUPPLY-RESERVE-FUND-GRANTS](https://cwcb.colorado.gov/funding/water-supply-reserve-fund-grants)



## ALTERNATIVE TRANSFER METHODS GRANT

The purpose of the program is to assist in developing and implementing creative alternatives to the traditional purchase and transfer of agricultural water. These alternative methods could include: interruptible supply agreements, long-term rotational fallowing, water banks, deficit/partial irrigation practices, alternate cropping types, and coupling conservation easements with an ATM. ATM projects addressing municipal and industrial demand, non-consumptive needs, compact compliance, and groundwater sustainability are all eligible.

[HTTP://CWCB.STATE.CO.US/LOANSGRANTS](http://CWCB.STATE.CO.US/LOANSGRANTS)



## COLORADO WATER TRUST

Colorado Water Trust has worked with many types of water users, including agricultural users, municipalities, water providers, and industrial users, to lease or enter into water use agreements to bolster stream flows. Compensation for use of water includes protection of the water right against abandonment and diminishment of historical consumptive use while under a lease, headgate, and delivery system upgrades, and enhanced stream flows on local streams. They have many projects including water processes, water rights solutions, infrastructure solutions, and consulting services.

[HTTPS://COLORADOWATERTRUST.ORG/PROGRAMS.](https://coloradowatertrust.org/programs)



# FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The following section identified by the dark blue tab in the top right corner of each page lays out the federal funding opportunities for Coloradans. These opportunities are from the federal government and national organizations.



# NRCS/ USDA

## AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION EASEMENT

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) provides financial and technical assistance to help conserve agricultural lands and wetlands and their related benefits. There are two components to the program – the Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) and the Wetlands Reserve Easements (WRE).

Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) protect the long-term viability of the nation's food supply by preventing the conversion of productive working lands to non-agricultural uses or non-grassland uses, depending on the type of enrollment.

With the Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE), NRCS helps to restore, protect and enhance enrolled wetlands.

[HTTPS://WWW.NRCS.USDA.GOV/WPS/PORTAL/NRCS/MAIN/CO/PROGRAMS/EASEMENTS/ACEP/](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/co/programs/easements/acep/)



## CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANTS

Conservation Innovation Grants (CIGs) support the development and testing of promising new conservation technologies and approaches, with the goal of making them available for use as quickly as possible by conservation-minded farmers and ranchers nationwide. Grantees must match 50 percent of the funds provided by the CIG award through non-federal in-kind or cash contributions and are also responsible for providing necessary technical assistance. NRCS provides technical oversight for the project.

[HTTPS://WWW.NRCS.USDA.GOV/WPS/PORTAL/NRCS/MAIN/NATIONAL/PROGRAMS/FINANCIAL/CIG/](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/cig/)

## REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) promotes coordination of NRCS conservation activities with partners that offer value-added contributions to expand our collective ability to address on-farm, watershed, and regional natural resource concerns. Through RCPP, NRCS seeks to co-invest with partners to implement projects that demonstrate innovative solutions to conservation challenges and provide measurable improvements and outcomes tied to the resource concerns they seek to address.

[HTTPS://WWW.NRCS.USDA.GOV/WPS/PORTAL/NRCS/MAIN/NATIONAL/PROGRAMS/FINANCIAL/RCPP/#](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/rcpp/#)



## **WATERSHED AND FLOOD PREVENTION OPERATIONS (WFPO) PROGRAM**

The Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program help units of federal, state, local, and tribal government (project sponsors) protect and restore watersheds up to 250,000 acres.

This program provides for cooperation between the Federal government and the states and their political subdivisions to work together to prevent erosion; floodwater and sediment damage; to further the conservation development, use and disposal of water; and to further the conservation and proper use of land in authorized watersheds. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offers financial and technical assistance through this program for the following purposes: erosion and sediment control, watershed protection, flood prevention, water quality improvements, rural, municipal and industrial water supply, water management, fish and wildlife habitat enhancement, and hydropower sources.

[HTTPS://WWW.NRCS.USDA.GOV/WPS/PORTAL/NRCS/DETAIL/NATIONAL/PROGRAMS/LANDSCAPE/WFPO/?CID=NRCS143\\_008271](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/landscape/wfpo/?CID=NRCS143_008271)



# BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

## DESALINATION AND WATER PURIFICATION RESEARCH PROGRAM PITCH TO PILOT

DWPR program activities further support multiple related initiatives related to the Water Subcabinet such as the Water Reuse Action Plan and Water Security Grand Challenge. The program also aligns with Executive Order 14008, “Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad,” by investing in the development and application of advanced water treatment technologies that expand access to otherwise unusable water resources, thereby increasing water supply flexibility under the risks of long-term climate change and shorter-term drought.

[WWW.USBR.GOV/RESEARCH/DWPR](http://WWW.USBR.GOV/RESEARCH/DWPR).

[HTTPS://WWW.GRANTS.GOV/WEB/GRANTS/SEARCH-GRANTS.HTML?](https://WWW.GRANTS.GOV/WEB/GRANTS/SEARCH-GRANTS.HTML?)

[KEYWORDS=R22AS00316](https://WWW.GRANTS.GOV/WEB/GRANTS/SEARCH-GRANTS.HTML?KEYWORDS=R22AS00316)



## WATER AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY GRANTS

Through WaterSMART Water and Energy Efficiency Grants (formerly Challenge Grants), Reclamation provides 50/50 cost-share funding to irrigation and water districts, tribes, states, and other entities with water or power delivery authority. Projects conserve and use water more efficiently; increase the production of hydropower; mitigate conflict risk in areas at a high risk of future water conflict and accomplish other benefits that contribute to water supply reliability in the western United States. Projects are selected through a competitive process and the focus is on projects that can be completed within two or three years. Past projects have included piping and lining ditches, improving ditch operations through automation, telemetry for measuring devices and headgates, regulating reservoirs, irrigation scheduling, and soil moisture and groundwater monitoring.

[HTTPS://WWW.USBR.GOV/WATERSMART/WEEG/](https://www.usbr.gov/watersmart/weeg/)



## SMALL-SCALE WATER EFFICIENCY PROJECTS

Through the WaterSMART Small-Scale Water Efficiency Projects, Reclamation provides 50/50 cost-share funding to irrigation and water districts, tribes, states, and other entities with water or power delivery authority for small water efficiency improvements that have been identified through previous planning efforts. Projects eligible for funding include the installation of flow measurement or automation in a specific part of a water delivery system, lining of a section of a canal to address seepage, or other similar projects.

[HTTPS://WWW.USBR.GOV/WATERSMART/SWEP/INDEX.HTML](https://www.usbr.gov/watersmart/swep/index.html)

## DROUGHT RESPONSE PROGRAM

The Bureau of Reclamation's Drought Response Program supports a proactive approach to drought by providing assistance to water managers to develop and update comprehensive drought plans and implement projects that will build long-term resilience to drought. Program areas include contingency planning, resiliency projects, and emergency response actions.

[HTTPS://WWW.USBR.GOV/DROUGHT/#:~:TEXT=0N%20MARCH%2024%2C%202022%2C%20THE,Long%2Dterm%20resilience%20to%20drought](https://www.usbr.gov/drought/#:~:text=0N%20MARCH%2024%2C%202022%2C%20THE,Long%2Dterm%20resilience%20to%20drought)



## ENVIRONMENTAL WATER RESOURCES PROJECTS

WaterSMART Environmental Water Resources Projects is a new category of funding to support projects focused on environmental benefits developed as part of a collaborative process to help carry out an established strategy to increase the reliability of water resources.

Applicants are invited to leverage their money and resources by cost-sharing with Reclamation on Environmental Water Resources Projects, including water conservation and efficiency projects that result in quantifiable and sustained water savings and benefit ecological values; water management or infrastructure improvements to mitigate drought-related impacts on ecological values; and watershed management or restoration projects benefitting ecological values that have a nexus to water resources or water resources management.

[HTTPS://WWW.USBR.GOV/WATERSMART/EWRP/INDEX.HTML](https://www.usbr.gov/watersmart/ewrp/index.html)



## WATER MARKETING STRATEGY GRANTS

Through the WaterSMART Water Marketing Strategy Grants, Reclamation provides assistance to states, tribes, and local governments to conduct planning activities to develop water marketing strategies that establish or expand water markets or water marketing activities between willing participants, in compliance with state and federal laws.

[HTTPS://WWW.USBR.GOV/WATERSMART/WATERMARKETING/INDEX.HTML](https://www.usbr.gov/watersmart/watermarketing/index.html)



## **SALINITY BASIN FUNDING (LOWER GUNNISON)**

We are fortunate to live at the headwaters of the Colorado River. Our location and senior water rights provide many agricultural water users with a relatively abundant supply of clean water. While junior and downstream users certainly benefit from water conservation measures, efficient water use also benefits senior water rights holders. Piping irrigation canals can provide advantages such as a longer irrigation season, more water delivered in dry years, less ditch maintenance, reduction of pumping costs for pressurized systems, increased yields with more efficient on-farm systems, and options to avoid buy-and-dry to meet growing water demands.

Funding programs available now in designated salinity control areas can help you build an irrigation system that sustains agriculture well into the future. Contact the Colorado Department of Agriculture's Salinity Program Coordinator.

[HTTPS://WWW.USBR.GOV/UC/PROGACT/SALINITY/](https://www.usbr.gov/uc/progact/salinity/)



Water infrastructure across Colorado is critical for not only our state but surrounding states who also depend on that water. Taking the time to apply for funding to implement projects to help update, repair, and expand on that infrastructure is key to ensuring reliable infrastructure for generations to come.

This guide is not an exhaustive list but includes resources we thought most vital to funding projects. If you have any additional resources you would like to add, please contact us through DARCA. The Colorado Irrigation Infrastructure Resource Hub is managed by DARCA staff.

This project would not be possible without the collaborative effort of River Network and Ditch and Reservoir Company Alliance. That collaborative effort includes Amber Weber, Micaela Fenton, Erin Kanzig, Mikhaela Mullins, and Nichole Seltzer. Thank you to the DARCA board for their time in adding their expertise and reviewing content. The Colorado Water Conservation Board provided funding for this project.

Please see our live site that captures this information and so much more.

