



AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT AND PROTECTION (ASAP)

EMERGENCY MATCHING GRANT PROGRAM

**APPLICATIONS DUE
OCTOBER 30, 2020**

APPLICATION GUIDELINES



AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT AND PROTECTION (ASAP) EMERGENCY MATCHING GRANT PROGRAM

APPLICATIONS MUST BE POSTMARKED BY OCTOBER 30, 2020

Application packages should be addressed to:

Jennifer Kuszmar, Matching Grant Program Coordinator
Sonoma County Ag + Open Space
747 Mendocino Ave., Suite 100
Santa Rosa, CA 95401

Applications and materials are available at www.sonomaopenspace.org/ASAP

To request an application, or for any questions, contact:

Jennifer Kuszmar, Matching Grant Program Coordinator
707.565.7266 | jennifer.kuszmar@sonoma-county.org



ABOUT AG + OPEN SPACE

The Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District (Ag + Open Space) permanently protects the diverse agricultural, natural resource, and scenic open space lands of Sonoma County for future generations. In collaboration with conservation easement landowners, we are responsible for the perpetual protection of more than 117,000 acres of land within Sonoma County. Ag + Open Space's work relies on willing sellers who voluntarily protect their land through a conservation easement. Funding for protection of these agricultural and open space lands is provided by a quarter-cent sales tax approved by voters in 1990 and reauthorized in 2006. For more information, please visit www.sonomaopenspace.org.

ABOUT THE ASAP EMERGENCY MATCHING GRANT PROGRAM

In response to the impacts of COVID-19 on the Sonoma County agricultural community, Ag + Open Space has created the Agricultural Support and Protection (ASAP) Emergency Matching Grant Program. The ASAP Program will support farmers and ranchers who can demonstrate that financial assistance is needed to prevent the lands they farm from going fallow or being devoted to non-agricultural uses as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Funds awarded through the ASAP Emergency Matching Grant Program will contribute to keeping agricultural lands productive by mitigating the impacts of COVID-19 on Sonoma County's agricultural community, the vitality of which is essential in the provision of local food, natural resource protection, scenic open space and economic opportunities.

In July 2020, the Ag + Open Space Board of Directors authorized the launch of this new grant program. Under the voter-approved Expenditure Plan, Ag + Open Space is authorized to devote funding to protect "agriculturally productive lands," defined to include "working farms and ranches, and other lands used for the production of food, fiber and plant materials and the raising and maintaining of livestock and farm animals." Paragraph 5 authorizes expenditures to undertake a potentially broad range of "other open space projects" through matching grants. Although the Matching Grant Program is usually applied to fund urban open space and recreation projects within and near incorporated or urbanized areas, the ASAP Program is a limited one-time expansion of the program to preserve agricultural land uses as "other open space projects" in this unique emergency circumstance. Applicants accepted into the ASAP Program will be required to provide financial contributions, called matching funds, toward keeping the ASAP-funded agricultural operation in production. Examples of match include but are not limited to lease or mortgage payments, supplies and materials necessary for the operation, sales and donations of agricultural products, and/or other grant funds.

The proposed budget for the ASAP Emergency Matching Grant Program is \$1,000,000.



ASAP EMERGENCY GRANT PROGRAM QUALIFICATIONS & CRITERIA

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS INCLUDE:

1. Farmers, ranchers, and producers in Sonoma County whose agricultural operations have been acutely affected by COVID-19.
2. Public agencies, 501(c)(3) nonprofits, and other agricultural associations that support local agriculture that can demonstrate how funding would directly support continued agricultural production.

ASAP EMERGENCY GRANT PROGRAM PROJECT CRITERIA:

The ASAP Emergency Grant Program seeks to fund projects that support farms and ranches in Sonoma County. The goal of the ASAP Emergency Grant Program is to provide financial assistance to aid in keeping Sonoma County's agricultural community and lands productive during this unprecedented time.

All applications shall be reviewed using the following criteria, which have been reviewed by Ag + Open Space's Agricultural Advisory Team.

1. **Impacts of COVID-19:** Applicants must describe the acute impacts of COVID-19 on the productivity of their agricultural operation. Examples of impacts include, but are not limited to, disruptions to supply chain, reduction in sales, limited in-person sales opportunities, and inability to pay a lease or mortgage due to decreased income. If an application is eligible and is being considered for funding, Ag + Open Space may require applicants to submit financial information in order to compare changes to the agricultural production related to COVID-19 and substantiate impacts described in their

application. Types of financial information may include, but are not limited to, audited financial statements and/or profit and loss statements, changes in earnings pre- and post COVID. Such statements, if required, will be submitted separately with confidential markings to facilitate disclosure of the remainder of the application, which will be a public document.

2. **Use of ASAP Grant Funds:** Applicants must provide detailed information describing how they will utilize ASAP Emergency Grant Funding to maintain the productivity of land-based agricultural operation(s). Applicants that are not farmers or ranchers will be required to demonstrate a contractual commitment with ranchers and/or farmers that will assure that they are working with a willing landowner partner and that the grants serve their primary purpose to keep vulnerable agricultural operations in production.
3. **Public Benefit:** A significant part of Ag + Open Space's mission is to protect and preserve agriculturally productive lands in Sonoma County for current and future generations. Agricultural activities offer many benefits to the greater community including jobs and revenue to the local economy, as well as locally produced food, fiber, and other agricultural crops. Protection of agriculturally productive land also helps to maintain open space, scenic views, and greenbelts. Agriculturally-productive lands also protect aquatic ecosystems and groundwater basins and provide habitat for native species of plants and wildlife. Because of these multiple benefits, protection of priority, at-risk agricultural lands is essential to the continued viability of agriculture as well as the quality of life in the county. Applicants must provide a description of anticipated public benefits of the grant-funded project because of continued operations.



Ineligible projects and/or project costs include:

- Projects that mitigate hardships or other impacts that were not created or exacerbated by COVID-19.
- Projects that help agricultural business but do not ensure land remains in production or projects that are not land-based.
- Projects that only have private or commercial benefits.

MATCHING FUNDS REQUIREMENT:

All applications must demonstrate a contribution of funds (e.g. match) to the project. These costs can include, but are not limited to:

- Mortgage or lease payments on lands that are used for cultivation of agricultural products.
- Materials necessary for agricultural production.
- Donations or discounted sales of agricultural products to charitable organizations.
- Cash contributions from the applicant, farmer, rancher, or other funding source.
- Other costs necessary to maintain viable agricultural productivity that are funded without ASAP grant dollars.

APPLICATION EVALUATION, ACCEPTANCE & APPROVAL PROCESS

1. **Evaluation:** Ag + Open Space staff and a subcommittee comprised of members of the Advisory Committee and Fiscal Oversight Commission evaluates applications using the the evaluation criteria. During this period, staff may request a site visit of the project property or supporting information from applicants.

In consultation with the subcommittee, Ag + Open Space staff recommends the most competitive projects to the full Advisory Committee, Fiscal Oversight Commission, and ultimately the Board of Directors.

2. **Acceptance:** Ag + Open Space staff presents the recommended suite of projects, along with any comments and suggestions from the Advisory Committee and Fiscal Oversight Commission, to Ag + Open Space's Board of Directors. Based upon the information presented, the Board of Directors determines which projects, with recommended funding amounts, are accepted into the ASAP Program. Acceptance into the program is not a guarantee of funding.

3. **Approval:** Following acceptance into the ASAP Emergency Matching Grant Program, Ag + Open Space staff prepares a matching grant agreement that must be executed by the applicant as a condition of any funding. The matching grant agreement will define the project and will identify what project components are eligible for reimbursement among other agreement terms. By tendering an application, applicants acknowledge and indicate a willingness to execute a grant agreement on such terms and conditions as may be required by Ag + Open Space. Ag + Open Space shall not be liable to the applicant or any third party for any failure to reach agreement on the grant conditions, which will be crafted on a project-specific basis as necessary, in the judgment of Ag + Open Space staff, to ensure accountability for measurable project objectives.
4. **Ag + Open Space Reserved Rights**
 - a. Ag + Open Space reserves the right to request clarification and/or supplemental information from any applicant to facilitate evaluation of applications received.
 - b. Ag + Open Space reserves the right to select the applications which best meet the intent of the ASAP Emergency Matching Grant Program. The Board may award funding to multiple qualified applicants or, if deemed in the best interest of Ag + Open Space, to none of the applicants. Ag + Open Space makes no guarantee of any or equal amounts of funding. Ag + Open Space further reserves the right to reject any or all applications for any reason.
 - c. Generally, the application(s) recommended by staff and the ASAP Subcommittee will be recommended to the Board of Directors, but the Board is not bound to accept the recommendation(s) or to award the grants to the recommended applicant(s).
 - d. The issuance of this solicitation does not constitute an award commitment on the part of Ag + Open Space, and Ag + Open Space shall not pay for costs incurred in the preparation or submission of applications. All costs and expenses associated with the preparation of an application, including all supplemental materials as may be requested by Ag + Open Space, shall be borne by the applicant.
 - e. Ag + Open Space shall not be liable for any pre-contractual expenses incurred by the potential grantees. Ag + Open Space shall be held harmless and free from any and all liability, claims, or expenses whatsoever incurred by, or on behalf of, any person or organization responding to this solicitation.
 - f. Minimum grant terms shall be made available on the Ag + Open Space website during the application period.

Applications are due October 30, 2020 and funding recommendations to the Board of Directors will be announced approximately 4–6 weeks later.





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OPEN
SPACE**
SONOMA COUNTY

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www.sonomaopenspace.org/ASAP