

Funded Training Opportunity

California Association of Resource Conservation Districts Solicits Applications for The Agricultural Management Systems Learning Collaborative

- [Register here for the informational webinar to be held September 17th, 12:00pm.](#)
- [The recorded webinar and additional information is available at carcd.org](#)

The details and application can be accessed here:

<https://www.gotomygrants.com/Public/Opportunities/Details/292bc932-7447-42e2-b936-9a13450c90ea>

1. Summary of the Funding Opportunity

Chico State's [Center for Regenerative Agriculture and Resilient Systems \(CRARS\)](#), in collaboration with the [California Association of Resource Conservation Districts \(CARCD\)](#) [1] and other project partners, has received funding for the **Agricultural Management Systems Learning Collaborative ('The Collaborative')** through a grant from the USDA National Institutes of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Non-Land Grant Colleges of Agriculture (NLGCA) program. The Collaborative is developing a comprehensive approach to train and support producers, agricultural professionals, and students to become leaders in systems-based agricultural management.

As part of the project's activities, CARCD is currently **accepting applications through October 3rd, 2021, 11:59pm**, from regional technical assistance providers (TAPs) and other agricultural professionals to work in partnership with agricultural producers to help establish and participate in a peer mentoring network centered in systems-based agricultural management. Stipends of **\$3000 per Mentor Team** (\$1,500 per person) will be provided to 10 Mentor Teams of producers and agricultural professionals (20 individuals) for Fall 2021-Spring 2022 (Cohort 1) and an additional 10 Mentor Teams for Fall 2022-Spring 2023 (Cohort 2).

Selected Mentor Teams will:

- Enroll in four online courses in Agricultural Management Systems. Courses will be developed by CRARS and offered through Chico State's Office of Regional and Continuing Education (RCE). Cohort 1 courses will be starting on October 18.
- Work together to create conservation management plans on California farms and ranches.
- Participate in community mentoring activities (see Participant Commitments below).

The purpose of this Funding Opportunity and the subsequent review and selection process are to:

- Solicit proposals from various candidate organizations and agricultural spaces.

- Conduct a fair and extensive evaluation based on the criteria embedded in the application.
- Select a diverse cohort of participants who best represent, have experience working with and/or
- Demonstrate intentions to support California producers, including members of the State's diverse agricultural communities.[2]

Agricultural professionals who are bilingual, multilingual, within the [geographic region](#) of the CRARS Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), and/or have experience in/a desire to work with historically underrepresented agricultural communities and producers are highly encouraged to apply.

2. The Collaborative: Project Background

Rationale: California is the nation's leading agricultural producer by total receipts, generating over \$50 billion in 2019, far exceeding the number two leading state of Iowa (\$27.5 billion) and representing 13.5% of U.S. total receipts. By sheer size and productivity, California has significant potential to contribute to working lands conservation efforts; however, there are several barriers to producer adoption of conservation practices, which can be addressed through systems-based approaches. These barriers include cultural stigma; lack of producer-driven knowledge sharing of the transition process and risk management; number of context-specific field demonstrations; and lack of knowledge and/or access to information, training and assistance with systems-based agricultural management. It is equally important that agricultural professionals providing assistance to producers (e.g., extension, RCD and NRCS staff) have access to the latest information and training. Currently, producers and agricultural professionals must piece together various workshops and online materials.

Purpose and Approach: This opportunity addresses these barriers through a comprehensive approach to outreach and training of producers, agricultural professionals, and the students who will become the nation's next generation of agricultural leaders. The project design attends to the identified need for information and assistance to improve productivity through sustainable resource management strategies, and the need for strong community building and support to address real and perceived practical, cultural and economic barriers. Flexibility in the activities and delivery system provides access to multiple audiences, in which the interactions of these audiences are mutually beneficial. The approach is designed to foster conversation and collaboration among diverse stakeholders, creating conditions that support innovative and collaborative strategies to address current and future threats and opportunities for California agricultural production.

Participant Commitments: Mentor Teams are expected to participate in the following activities:

- Enroll in four online courses in Agricultural Management Systems designed by The Center
 - Each course is about 6-8 weeks, self-paced during the week, and a one-hour discussion per week. This will be 5-6 hours per week on average in course work, plus an additional 4 hours of project related work, for a total of about 10 hrs a week. Each team will take one course at a time.
- Work with other partners to create conservation management plans on California farms and ranches.
- Participate in community mentoring activities..

- Participate in the California-focused Soil Health Academy. This is an optional 3-day, grower-focused, soil health intensive (highly encouraged).
- Be willing to present on your experiences of systems-based learning, planning and implementation in a dedicated session at the virtual CARCD Annual Conference (in fall or early winter), if possible.
- Complete pre/post surveys for The Center to collect, compare, and measure change in participants' expectations and outcomes from course learning experiences.

Coursework: Coursework will be explained in more detail during the September 17 webinar (registration and recording links above). The tentative titles of the online courses are:

- Course 1: Systems Theory in Regenerative Ag Management
- Course 2: Soil Health Systems Management
- Course 3: Holistic Farm/Ranch Planning and Design
- Course 4: Science & Practice of Ecological Forest and Range Management

3. Application Timeline

- Application portal is open now.
- Webinar will be hosted on September 17, 2021. Recording will be available at carcd.org.
- Applications will be accepted until October 3rd, 2021 at 11:59pm via the submission portal. Any proposals received after this date and time will be given second priority in the cohort selection process.
- Mentor Teams will be announced by October 11, 2021.
- NOTE: 50% of stipend will be disbursed initially and 50% upon conclusion of commitments.

4. Application Questions and Evaluation Criteria

Criteria/necessary commitments are embedded in the application questions. Each question will be evaluated and scored by a review team and totaled for a complete score. If information is considered incomplete, CARCD reserves the right to follow up for missing information before submitting a final score for consideration of award, or disqualify the application.

We recommend that the TAP take the lead on the application (access is via single login), then work together with the producer to enter answers from the producers. Please note that questions may be directed to Producers, TAPs, or both (a team response).

The application and submission portal are accessed here:

<https://www.gotomygrants.com/Public/Opportunities/Details/292bc932-7447-42e2-b936-9a13450c90ea>

QUESTIONS that are asked within the application portal:

1. The intention of this Collaborative is for teams to create conservation plans/soil health management plans for an identified site.
 - a. Please describe the intended site, and general goals and resource concerns. [1500 characters max]

- b. Do you have the intention to implement the plan, assuming resources are available? Y/N
2. Is the Producer considered a Historically Underserved Producer[3]? Y/N (Producer)
 3. Are you likely available and willing to participate as a discussion panel member at one session during the virtual CARCD Annual Conference, to be held in January 2022? Y/N (Producer and TAP)
 4. Project dissemination efforts include Producer/Project Profiles that will be posted on the CRARS and CARCD websites. Are you willing to participate in this effort (e.g., provide data, participate in interviews)? Y/N (Producer and TAP)
 5. As additional producers and agricultural professionals become interested in the project, are you willing to serve as a mentor contact (i.e., share your experience, provide advice)? Y/N (Producer and TAP)
 6. CSU Chico and CARCD strive to serve the diverse agricultural communities in the state. How might your team help us accomplish that goal? (e.g. languages other than English spoken, experience working with historically underrepresented producers, etc.) [900 characters max]
 7. In what county(ies) are you providing agricultural technical assistance?
-

[1] CARCD is the membership organization for 95 Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs) in California, who have been specializing in on-the-ground conservation work for the past 75 years. This Opportunity is directed not just to RCDs: CARCD welcomes all qualified entities from around the state of California to respond to this Opportunity. CARCD can be found on the web at carcd.org

[2] As defined by the NIFA NLGCA program, diverse agricultural communities include small-scale producers, Historically Underrepresented (HU) groups, and beginning farmers/ranchers.

[3] As defined in the 2018 Farm Bill, historical underrepresented producers include limited resource, socially disadvantaged, beginning and veteran farmers and ranchers. For more information see:
https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/people/outreach/slbfr/?cid=nrcsdev11_001040

"This work is supported by 'Capacity Building Grants for Non-Land Grant Colleges of Agriculture' grant no.#2021-70001-34773 from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture."