

Agricultural Water Optimization Grant Program Policies and Procedures

Purpose:

- **Pursuant to Utah Code Chapter 73-10g Sections 201-208, increase agricultural water optimization by awarding grants that:**
 - **Maintain viable agriculture while reducing water depletion to enhance water availability and minimize impacts on water supply, water quality, and the environment.**
 - **Provide increased operational flexibility to agricultural water users.**
 - **Provide the opportunity for saved water to be considered a beneficial use if a change application is filed with the State Engineer.**
 - **Provide additional nonuse protection if a change application is filed.**
 - **Improve water quantification through:**
 - **Showing accurate, real-time measurement of water use; and**
 - **Documenting actual water savings in cubic feet per second (CFS) or acre feet.**

Policies and Procedures:

The Agricultural Water Optimization Committee (the Committee) created in Section 73-10g-205 of the Utah Code, will oversee the Agricultural Water Optimization Grant Program (the program) and shall adopt and approve policies and procedures, administrative rules, and the program application, eligibility criteria, ranking criteria, and scoring metrics.

The Committee membership shall be as defined in Utah Code Section 73-10g-205 or any later enactment of that section.

The Committee shall appoint a member to serve as chair and may appoint a vice-chair.

The Committee shall follow the following procedures, with support provided by UDAF staff, including a manager who will oversee the day to day activities of the program:

- The Committee shall establish funding application periods with at least one application period per year.
- UDAF staff will screen applications and provide preliminary approval to those that meet eligibility criteria.
- As required by Utah Code Subsection 73-3-3(2), pre-approved applicants will have a pre-filing consultation with the Utah Division of Water Rights (DWRi) to determine if a change application is needed for the project, the potential water savings as a result of the project, and water measurement that may be required.

- Following the pre-filing consultation, the pre-approved agricultural water optimization application may be filed with the Committee.
- The Committee will review and rank applications and make funding recommendations to the Utah Conservation Commission (UCC).
- As outlined in Utah Code Section 73-10g-206, the UCC may award grants based on recommendations from the Committee.
- Each funding application period may have a unique application, eligibility criteria and description of what needs to be included in the application, and ranking criteria that will be used to evaluate the applications submitted within that period.
- The Committee may designate different funding pools so that like projects rank against like projects.
- The program may designate targeted priority areas including, but not limited to, Division of Water Quality impaired watersheds, Drinking Water source protection areas, and areas where the quality and quantity of water is not sufficient to protect or maintain priority aquatic species.
- The Committee shall adopt ranking criteria for the program that is consistent with statutory requirements and the purposes of the program.
- The Committee may adopt ranking criteria that gives priority to projects with the greatest potential to reduce diversion and depletions.
- If federal funding has been appropriated for the program, ranking criteria adopted by the Committee shall require that federal funding be awarded prior to state funding.
- Following a grant award by the UCC, UDAF shall work with each grantee to determine whether there are other funding sources available to fund the project and assist grantees in identifying sources and securing additional funding.
- Before a recipient may receive grant funds awarded by the UCC, the grant recipient shall enter an agreement that meets the requirements of Utah Code Subsection 73-10g-206(3), or any later enactment thereof. The agreement shall include acknowledgement that the grant recipient will comply with metering and reporting requirements required in a decision of the State Engineer.
- UDAF shall:
 - monitor the grant related activities of each grant recipients;
 - certify a grant funded project once the project is complete;
 - determine whether there are other funding sources available to fund each project and assist grantees in identifying those funding sources and securing additional funding; and
 - provide information to the DWRi and Division of Water Resources (DWRe) that is requested and necessary for performance of their statutory responsibilities.
- Grantees are required to submit annual reports for a 3-year period after the project is completed. Reports may include:
 - water diverted;
 - depletion estimates based on guidance from DWRi;
 - irrigation season;
 - acres irrigated;

- crops irrigated;
 - production records (yields); and
 - if applicable, water quality benefits.
- The program will gather water savings data, crop production data, the number of projects completed, and other relevant information. The information gathered will be presented as aggregated data to protect the individual's private information.
- The committee will work with DWRi and DWRe to satisfy the annual reporting requirement of Section 73-10g-207, including compiling, publishing, and presenting an annual report on:
 - completed projects;
 - saved water made available from program projects; and
 - the effectiveness of the program funding.
- Applications and personal information will be protected under Utah Code Title 63G, Chapter 2, Government Records Access and Management Act.
- The program will follow all state laws and applicable federal regulations, including the specific requirements set forth in Chapter 73-10g, Water Infrastructure and Long Term Planning.