

Irrigation Modernization Funding

Frequently Asked Questions

In 2023, the Oregon Legislature passed House Bill 5030, providing \$50 million to issue grants for irrigation modernization projects. For efficiency in application review, OWRD is running the funding cycle for Irrigation Modernization Funding concurrently with the funding cycle for the Water Project Grants and Loans (WPGL) program. The purpose of this document is to answer questions specific to the Irrigation Modernization Funding.

What is an irrigation modernization project?

An irrigation modernization project is a project that improves water use efficiency of irrigation systems on currently irrigated agricultural lands. Eligible activities include, but are not limited to: piping irrigation canals, ditches or laterals; lining irrigation canals, ditches or laterals; installing sprinkler or microirrigation systems; upgrading existing infrastructure, such as flumes or pipes; installing or upgrading pump stations, including variable speed pumps; installing measuring devices or soil moisture monitoring; installing Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) systems; purchasing irrigation scheduling software; and upgrading turnouts.

Who can apply for Irrigation Modernization Funding?

If a project otherwise qualifies for the Irrigation Modernization Funding, any person, Indian tribe, or non-profit organization may apply. "Person" includes individuals, corporations, associations, firms, partnerships, joint stock companies, public and municipal corporations, local governments, as well as state and federal agencies.

How much funding is available?

Of the \$50 million authorized by the Oregon Legislature in 2023, OWRD anticipates \$25 million will be available for irrigation modernization projects for the 2024 funding cycles. Applications for the first funding cycle were due January 17, 2024 and funding decisions will be made by the Water Resources Commission in June 2024. OWRD is offering a second 2024 funding cycle with applications due July 10, 2024. At the December Commission meeting, projects may be awarded any funding remaining after the June 2024 awards and/or provisional funds from the additional \$25 million that will be available in 2025. OWRD would not enter into grant agreements for provisionally awarded projects until after the Bond sale occurs in March 2025.

Do all the Water Project Grants and Loans eligibility criteria apply to Irrigation Modernization Funding?

The eligibility criteria are different than WPGL. Applicants must meet the following statutory requirements for Irrigation Modernization Funding:

- **Project type** – Only irrigation modernization projects are eligible for this funding.
- **Federal match** – Projects **must** have one of the following sources of federal match:
 - Natural Resources Conservation Service funds associated with an authorized watershed plan
 - U.S. Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART grant
 - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's grants that are eligible to be on the Department of Environmental Quality's Intended Use Plan
- **Public Benefits** – The proposed project must provide public benefits in economic, environmental, and social/cultural categories. Please see the [WPGL & Irrigation Modernization Funding Scoring Criteria](#) document for more information.

- **Water Management and Conservation Plan** – If an applicant or co-applicant is required to have a Water Management and Conservation Plan (WMCP), the plan must be submitted to OWRD and receive approval prior to the application due date.

Do I need to have all match funding secured before applying?

No, the match funding does not need to be secured prior to applying. Match funding can include pending match commitments in the application. If you are awarded a grant, the match funding must be secured within 18 months of the award date and prior to OWRD releasing any grant funds. You would need to submit documentation from the Federal source that you have been awarded funds for the project. You would not need to have the funds in-hand within the 18-month time period, but a commitment of funds from the Federal source.

How will my application be evaluated?

Irrigation modernization projects will be evaluated in the same manner as WPGL projects with one exception. For projects involving surface water rights where the project conserves water, priority shall be given to projects that legally protect a portion of the conserved water instream commensurate with the amount required under the approach described in ORS 537.470.

For all projects, after submission, OWRD first reviews an application to determine completeness and funding eligibility. Applications that are deemed complete will be posted for public comment and forwarded to a multi-agency Technical Review Team (TRT). The TRT considers the public comments received and evaluates applications based on the economic, environmental, and social/cultural public benefits demonstrated in the application. For specific review criteria, please see the [WPGL & Irrigation Modernization Funding Scoring Criteria](#) document.

An opportunity to comment on the funding recommendation will be provided either through a public comment period and/or be accepted at the Water Resources Commission meeting before a funding decision. OWRD will present the TRT ranking, public comments, and funding recommendation to the Water Resources Commission for a funding decision.

When will grants be awarded?

OWRD anticipates that the Water Resources Commission (Commission) will make final funding decisions at their June 13-14, 2024 meeting for applications received by the January 17, 2024 deadline. OWRD anticipates the Commission will make funding decisions for applications received by the July 10, 2024 deadline at the December 12-13, 2024 meeting.

If your project is selected for funding, OWRD will work with you to develop a grant agreement. Please note that grantees cannot request reimbursement for costs incurred prior to the signing of a grant agreement; however, eligible costs incurred prior to signing the grant agreement can be used as cost-match.

Questions?

Please Contact: OWRD.grants@water.oregon.gov or 971-301-0718