

Reclamation Manual

Directives and Standards

Subject:	Snow Water Supply Forecast Program Cooperative Agreements Process
Purpose:	Establish requirements for reviewing, approving, and administering Snow Water Supply Forecast (SWSF) Program cooperative agreements under the Snow Water Supply Forecast Program. The benefit of this Directive and Standard (D&S) is the establishment of uniform requirements to promote consistency and efficiency in SWSF Program implementation.
Authority:	Snow Water Supply Forecast Program Authorization Act (P.L. 116-260, Sec. 1111); Reclamation Act of June 17, 1902. Section 9504 SECURE Water Act.
Approving Official:	Senior Advisor for Research and Development
Contact:	Research and Development Office (86-69100)

1. Introduction.

- A. In December 2020, Congress authorized the Snow Water Supply Forecast Program (Program) (P.L. 116-260, Sec. 1111), which aims to enhance snow monitoring and subsequent water supply forecasts. Under the Program, the Bureau of Reclamation provides cost-share, through Financial Assistance Agreements (FAA), on a competitive basis for a broad range of participants to conduct projects in snow monitoring and water supply forecasting.
- B. This D&S sets forth the requirements, responsibilities, and selection processes for awards conducted under the SWSF Program. Other Reclamation requirements concerning FAAs are described in Reclamation Manual (RM) D&S, *Requirements for Award and Administration of Financial Assistance Agreements (Grants and Cooperative Agreements)* (ACM 01-01), and elsewhere in the RM and are applicable to the SWSF Program.

2. Applicability.

This D&S applies to all Reclamation employees engaged in the selection, award, and oversight of the SWSF Program Awards, including activities that are related to the development of each SWSF Program Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO); the review and selection of applications for financial assistance and award of funding; and the post-award oversight and monitoring of FAAs under the SWSF Program. This D&S does not apply to SWSF Program activities outside of external NOFOs.

3. Program Budgeting.

The Senior Advisor for Research and Development will provide guidance and oversight on research prioritization and formulate a budget request to conduct SWSF Program Awards. It includes funding associated with the costs for selecting, awarding, and overseeing SWSF projects selected for funding.

Reclamation Manual

Directives and Standards

4. SWSF Program Awards.

The following specific requirements apply to SWSF Program Awards.

A. Conditions for Applying.

To be eligible for funding, an eligible applicant must apply by the deadline and must meet all the requirements of the NOFO, including describing an eligible project.

(1) Eligible Applicant.

Specific information regarding applicant eligibility will be included in each NOFO. Eligible applicants across the United States include: States, Indian Tribes, irrigation districts, water districts, private sector organizations, educational institutions, and non-profit entities.

(2) Ineligible Applicant.

The Grants Officer (GO) from the Mission Support Organization (MSO) will inform applicants that have applied but are subsequently determined to be ineligible for funding of that determination in writing within the timeframe set in the NOFO.

(3) Application Meets NOFO Requirements.

Reclamation will consider only those applications that meet the specific requirements as outlined in the NOFO (e.g., submission deadline, cost-share requirements).

(4) Cost-Share.

Reclamation will provide cost-share requirements as stated by the Authorities governing the SWSF Program and these will be detailed in the NOFO.

(5) Pre-Award Costs.

The NOFO will describe in detail the conditions under which pre-award costs incurred by an applicant may be included as project costs.

5. Selection Process for Financial Assistance.

The SWSF Program Administrator, in consultation with the Research and Development Program Manager (R&D Program Manager) and the Senior Advisor for Research and Development, develops NOFOs that align with Reclamation's mission and overall strategic plan. The SWSF Program Administrator also consults with the GO to ensure that all NOFOs are developed in accordance with government-wide, Departmental, and Reclamation requirements related to financial assistance.

A. Selection Process.

Reclamation's process for selecting projects for SWSF funding is as follows:

Reclamation Manual

Directives and Standards

(1) Preparation of the NOFO.

SWSF Program NOFOs will be prepared consistent with the goals of the Snow Water Supply Forecast Program Authorization Act, Departmental guidance, and this D&S. Each SWSF Program NOFO will identify specific requirements, including applicant and project eligibility, application deadlines, cost-share, and evaluation criteria.

(a) Development.

The SWSF Program Administrator will develop the NOFOs and will consult with the GO to ensure that all SWSF Program NOFOs comply with all financial assistance requirements.

(b) Evaluation Criteria.

The evaluation criteria for SWSF Program NOFOs will be consistent with the goals of the Snow Water Supply Forecast Program Authorization Act, Reclamation priorities, and Departmental guidance and will be described in detail, including associated point values, in each NOFO.

(2) Posting the NOFO.

The GO will post all NOFOs on Grants.gov.

(a) Commissioner Consultation.

The Senior Advisor for Research and Development will seek to ensure Commissioner's concurrence that the SWSF Program NOFO aligns with Reclamation's mission and overall strategic plan. Any significant changes to a SWSF Program NOFO will require the Senior Advisor for Research and Development to have a consultation with the Commissioner prior to posting the NOFO on Grants.gov. A consultation will also be provided if requested by the Commissioner.

(b) Application Deadline.

An NOFO will include an application deadline, which typically is at least 60 calendar days from the date of posting.

(3) Receipt of Applications.

The GO will create a master proposal list of all applications received. Each application will be date and time stamped when received to ensure that only applications received by the application deadline are considered for funding, as stated in the NOFO. The information to be captured in this master list will include the following:

(a) an application control number;

(b) applicant name, contact information, and address;

Reclamation Manual

Directives and Standards

- (c) the project title;
- (d) location;
- (e) date of application receipt;
- (f) requested Federal cost-share; and
- (g) total project costs.

(4) Establishment of the Application Review Committee (ARC).

In consultation with the Senior Advisor for Research and Development and R&D Program Manager, the SWSF Program Administrator will select the members of the ARC prior to the deadline for applications submitted in response to the NOFO.

(5) Initial Screening.

- (a) The GO will screen all applicants submitted prior to the application deadline to assess applicant eligibility, non-Federal cost share, and to ensure that each application meets NOFO requirements.
- (b) The GO will request additional information to clarify eligibility from the applicant and will consult with the SWSF Program Administrator, as necessary.
- (c) If an application is determined to be ineligible for funding at this stage, the GO, after consultation with the SWSF Program Administrator, will notify the applicant in writing of that determination in accordance with requirements set forth in the NOFO.
- (d) The GO will forward accepted applications to the SWSF Program Administrator for further review and consideration by the ARC, including determination of project eligibility. Project eligibility shall be determined based on requirements set forth in the NOFO.

(6) ARC Review.

- (a) The ARC reviews and evaluates submitted proposals based upon the established evaluation criteria and assesses the budget as proposed in relation to the tasks outlined in the application. The SWSF Program Administrator oversees the review of proposals by the ARC.
- (b) Prior to reviewing accepted applications, each ARC member will provide a signed Confidentiality and Document Security form and Conflict of Interest

Reclamation Manual

Directives and Standards

Certificate to the GO, who will serve as a point of contact to the SWSF Program Administrator and ARC members during review.

- (c) The ARC will:
- (d) review and evaluate technical merits of assigned proposals individually;
 - (i) convene to discuss their evaluated applications with other members of the review committee to identify any issues or discrepancies;
 - (ii) develop a consensus ranking;
 - (iii) recommend projects to be considered further for funding; and
 - (iv) make additional recommendations as appropriate within the scope of the ARC review.
- (e) The ARC's recommendation must be based on the merits of the proposals as evaluated against the evaluation criteria and the amount of funding available.

(7) Red-Flag Review.

The red-flag review will follow the ARC review.

- (a) The SWSF Program Administrator will consult with the Senior Advisor for Research and Development and R&D Program Manager, on results of ARC review, comprised as a ranked list of applications along with brief project descriptions.
- (b) The Senior Advisor for Research and Development will transmit a list of recommended applications for funding to the regional directors; Director, Technical Service Center; Director, Mission Assurance and Protection Organization; and Director, Program and Budget for review and recommendations.
- (c) The offices of the regional directors and directors of Denver directorates list above will identify any reasons why a proposed project would not be feasible or otherwise advisable, including environmental or cultural resources compliance issues, permitting issues, legal issues, past performance, or financial position, and address any specific concerns or questions raised by members of the ARC
- (d) The SWSF Program Administrator will consider all comments received during red-flag review and will reconvene the ARC as necessary to assess

Reclamation Manual

Directives and Standards

those comments and determine whether any modifications to the ARC's ranking or recommendations are warranted.

(8) Approval Process for Project Selection.

(a) Project Recommendation.

The Senior Advisor for Research and Development will transmit a prioritized list of proposals recommended for funding to the Commissioner based on the ARC review, the responses to red-flag review, and available funding.

(b) Commissioner Consultation.

The Senior Advisor for Research and Development will consult with the Commissioner regarding the project funding awards recommendations of the Senior Advisor for Research and Development.

(c) Final Selection List.

Following consultation with the Commissioner, the SWSF Program Administrator will document the final project selection list, including justification of any deviation from the ARC's final recommendations in writing.

(9) Notification to Applicants of Status.

The GO will notify each applicant of the status of its application for funding in writing.

(10) Debriefings.

The GO will include a statement in each unsuccessful notification letter offering the applicant a debriefing. If requested the SWSF Program Administrator will conduct the debriefing to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the applicant's project and proposal.

B. Award Information.

(1) Evaluation.

The GO will conduct and document, for each project selected for funding, all required pre-award due-diligence activities including, but not limited to:

- (a) pre-award clearances, determinations, reviews, and approvals;
- (b) reasonableness of proposed costs;
- (c) financial strength and stability of the organization (as appropriate);

Reclamation Manual

Directives and Standards

- (d) an initial review of the applicant's budget documentation for costs associated with proposed project tasks. Final budget approval is completed by the GO, adequacy of financial and business management systems, personnel practices, procurement procedures, and accounting policies and procedures, as established by applicable Office of Management and Budget (OMB) circulars and regulations.
- (2) Results.**
An MSO-certified Grants Officer Technical Representative (GOTR) will consult with the SWSF Program Administrator, and, as necessary, the GO will determine whether to remove the project from further consideration, if the results of pre-award reviews and clearances are unsatisfactory. If the results of all pre-award reviews and clearances are satisfactory, an award of funding will be made once the FAA is finalized.
- (3) Revisions to Scope of Work Prior to Award.**
The SWSF Program Administrator will determine, during the development of the FAA, whether any proposed revisions are likely to affect project benefits and costs and will reconvene the ARC as necessary to determine whether to recommend reconsideration of award of funding for the revised project.
- (4) Environmental and Cultural Resources Compliance.**
The GO will issue a notice-to-proceed letter to the SWSF Program Award recipient once the environmental and cultural resources compliance is complete. If a SWSF project includes ground disturbing activities, Reclamation will authorize ground disturbing activities to proceed on the SWSF project only after environmental and cultural resources compliance is complete.
- (5) FAA.**
FAAs executed in support of SWSF Program Awards, in addition to the standard requirements for FAAs executed by Reclamation, must include major milestones and estimated dates for completion within the Scope of Work section. The FAA must also include program-specific requirements as identified in this D&S and the NOFO.
- (6) Amount of Award.**
Reclamation will only consider funding projects in excess of the amount requested in the application or included in the FAA if Reclamation has substantial involvement and has caused additional costs to be incurred. In this case, Reclamation may cost-share the additional costs up to the maximum funding limit identified in the NOFO.
- (7) Performance Period.**
SWSF awards must be completed within the terms established in the NOFO and the specific date in the FAA, unless a time extension is approved by the GO after

Reclamation Manual

Directives and Standards

receiving a recommendation from the SWSF Program Administrator as provided in Paragraph 6.B.

6. Post-Award.

A. Reporting.

SWSF Program Awards require additional information to track project progress, in addition to financial assistance reporting requirements described in ACM 01-01.

(1) Interim Project Reports.

The GOTR will monitor and follow-up with SWSF Program Award recipients to ensure that the required technical project reports are submitted within the timeframe identified in the FAA.

(2) Final Project Presentation.

The GOTR will coordinate and work with the SWSF Program Award recipient and make arrangements for a final presentation at a Reclamation office to be determined. If travel is not possible, another form of a presentation could be arranged, such as a virtual presentation. The decision would be made by the SWSF Program Administrator.

(3) Recipient Noncompliance.

The GO will determine whether failure by the SWSF Program Award recipient to comply with the terms and conditions of the FAA, such as noncompliance with the reporting requirements, requires suspension and/or termination of the agreement. Reclamation will also consider recipient noncompliance during any future red-flag reviews conducted as part of the SWSF Program.

(4) Final Project Report.

SWSF Program Award recipients are required to submit a final technical project report which will be made public via the SWSF website.

B. Modifications (Change in Scope and Time Extensions).

Projects are required to be completed within the timeframe stated in the FAA and shall not exceed the stated Federal cost-share. If a SWSF Program Award recipient is unable to complete the entire project without exceeding the project costs, changing part of the scope, or exceeding the timeframe described in the FAA, the following shall apply:

(1) Request to Modify the FAA.

The GOTR will consult the SWSF Program Award recipient, to develop a formal written request forwarded from the GOTR to the SWSF Program Administrator for consideration, if a change in scope or time extension is requested by the SWSF Program Award recipient.

(2) Analysis of Benefits.

Reclamation Manual

Directives and Standards

The scope of a project may be scaled back only if the impact to the project benefits will not be significant. The significance of the impact will be determined based on consideration of all the expected benefits of the project and whether the scaled-back project can accomplish the purposes for which the award was made.

(3) Approval Process.

The SWSF Program Administrator will evaluate the request and transmit a recommendation to the GO and GOTR.

(4) Formal Modification.

The GO will prepare and execute a formal modification to the FAA based on the SWSF Program Administrator recommendation on how to proceed.

C. Expenditures.

In general, and as practical based on the project, the GO and the GOTR will ensure that the non-Federal share of project costs is expended at the same or greater rate as the Federal share of project costs, and that costs are appropriate and accurate. The GOTR and SWSF Program Administrator will communicate on expenditures issues that arise.

D. Communication of Project Results.

The SWSF Program Administrator will work with R&D office staff to post final project reports to the SWSF website and to develop other results dissemination materials as appropriate.

E. Close-Out.

Reclamation personnel will follow the standard Reclamation and office procedures for closing-out FAAs.

F. Records keeping.

All employees shall maintain all records in accordance with the Information Management Handbook (IMH) as referenced in Reclamation Manual Directive and Standard, Information Management (RCD 05-01).

7. Definitions.

A. Applicant.

An entity that applies in response to a SWSF NOFO.

B. Application Review Committee or ARC.

The committee established to review and rank all SWSF Program Award applications submitted by accepted applicants. The ARC is generally comprised of staff members from Reclamation with expertise in snow monitoring and water supply forecasting. The ARC could also include other Federal employees from agencies outside of Reclamation, when appropriate.

Reclamation Manual

Directives and Standards

- C. Change of Scope.**
Modification of a FAA to revise the scope of work provided in the original FAA.
- D. Financial Assistance Agreement or FAA.**
As defined in ACM 01-01.
- E. Funding Opportunity Announcement or NOFO.**
A notice on Grants.gov of a competitive Federal grant funding opportunity available to the public.
- F. Grants Officer or GO.**
As defined in ACM 01-01.
- G. Grants Officer Technical Representative or GOTR.**
As defined in ACM 01-01.
- H. No-Cost Time Extension.**
Modification of a FAA to extend the completion date of a SWSF project without the provision of additional Federal funding to the SWSF award recipient or substantial changes to the scope of work, budget, or other terms and conditions of the FAA.
- I. Non-Federal Cost-Share.**
The contributions provided by non-Federal entities or funding partners to fund the non-Federal share of the project. Non-Federal cost-share under SWSF is provided through cash or in-kind contributions, which may be in the form of real property, equipment, supplies, and other expendable property, as well as the value of goods and services directly benefiting and specifically identifiable to a SWSF project.
- J. Pre-Award Costs.**
Costs associated with a SWSF project that are incurred prior to the date of execution of the FAA.
- K. Project Costs.**
The costs associated with commencing and completing a SWSF project including, but not limited to, costs for materials and supplies, environmental and cultural resources compliance costs, and labor costs.
- L. Red-Flag Review.**
The review conducted by Reclamation offices following the results of the ARC review to identify any reasons why a proposed project would not be feasible or otherwise advisable, including environmental or cultural resources compliance issues, permitting issues, legal issues, past performance, or financial position, and to address any specific concerns or questions raised by members of the ARC.
- M. SWSF Program Administrator.**

Reclamation Manual

Directives and Standards

Reclamation employee who administers the SWSF Program Reclamation-wide.

Reclamation Manual

Directives and Standards

N. SWSF Program Award.

A Federal financial assistance agreement entered between Reclamation and a SWSF Program award recipient that provides funding to assist the recipient on a snow monitoring and water supply forecasting related project

8. Review Period.

The originating office will review this release every 4 years.