



Funding Opportunities for Tribal Water Priorities:

A Guidebook for Indigenous Communities in the
Colorado River Basin

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Background

Western Resource Advocates (WRA) has been protecting Western lands and water for three decades and fosters the balance of vibrant Indigenous communities and ecological systems. Our Healthy Rivers team works to restore degraded river systems and safeguard water supplies for communities, agriculture, and wildlife through efficient water management.

In 2021, WRA's staff began reaching out to Indigenous communities to learn more about their water-related priorities, concerns, and opportunities for alignment with WRA resources and capacity. Meetings were held with tribal leadership, attorneys, and water management staff with the hope to work together on common goals that help advance their water management needs. A common barrier identified by tribes during these meetings is the difficulty in accessing funding to enhance water management goals. A clear need exists for a compilation of more detailed information on funding opportunities available to tribes to support common water interests.

Purpose

The focus of this funding project is to identify high-priority water needs common across numerous Indigenous communities and compile the most relevant grants and programs available for specific categories of projects in the Colorado River Basin (Basin). The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law signed in 2021, provides an estimated \$55 billion to fund water projects throughout the United States and to Tribal Nations. In addition to these federal opportunities, existing private funds are available to complement both matching requirements and cost-share policies that may be a barrier to receiving monies.

One of the difficulties in researching and accessing funding sources is the vast number of online websites with a wide range of information provided, some more detailed than others. This guidebook is meant to provide direction in a narrative, user-friendly format with answers to many of the questions asked by applicants. WRA envisions that having this resource in one location can enhance the search for tribal water funding and encourage application submission. This tool is designed for tribal governments looking to support three of the following specific project types: ecological restoration, water infrastructure (drinking water, wastewater, and irrigation), and external capacity (training, planning, and management).

Approach

Tribal priorities highlighted in this guidebook are based both on WRA's outreach and research and are strongly influenced and in alignment with recent studies by the Water & Tribes Initiative (WTI) and Anne Mariah Tapp's (2021) "*Enhancing Tribal Water Resource Management Capacity in the Colorado River Basin: A Baseline Assessment*" (Interim Report) and "[Universal Access to Clean Water for Tribes in the Colorado River Basin](#)". These reports provided credible research to determine what forms of funding to identify in this guidebook. (To connect previous studies with this guidebook, click the link of the report title; the WTI expect to publish the final report soon).

In researching funding sources available to Indigenous communities, WRA compiled an internal database of roughly 60-70 projects/programs utilizing four websites (see Appendix A). To provide a resource that would be most useful to the largest number of tribal communities and administrators, staff narrowed down the categories of water-related projects that had been identified most frequently as top priorities and are aligned with much of WRA's work. In other words, these water priorities were

common among many tribes in the Basin (see Appendix B). It is recognized that these three categories will not encompass all Indigenous water priorities in the Basin.

To keep the guidebook manageable in size, four to five funding sources were provided under each category and were chosen based on level of detail and relevance to project type. Information provided under each funding source was developed based on outreach feedback.

Common funding questions asked by tribal administrators include:

- Where to find funding guidelines?
- What are the different ways in which money is disseminated?
- Are there limitations of what projects tribes can apply for?
- Which grants match our needs?

Interconnected challenges with funding and tribes:

- Limited capacity to write/or apply for grants.
- Limited capacity to research funding.
- Matching funds and cost shares

The template of information provided under each funding source includes details such as:

- Funding program name/agency
- Eligible entities
- Funding type
- Program background
 - Description
 - Funding ranges
 - Number of projects awarded annually
 - Cost-share required
 - Assistance provided through financial assistance grants or coop agreements
- Funding amount and length
- Deadline
- Contacts
- Example projects recently funded
- Tips/Recommendations

WRA staff coordinated closely with WTI staff in developing the guidebook framework and received valuable feedback from: Daryl Vigil, Matt McKinney, Anne Mariah Tapp, Heather Tanana, and Travis Anklam. In addition, the following Indigenous communities provided review comments: the Quechan Tribe, Southern Ute Indian Tribe, Navajo Nation, and Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community.

NOTE: This guidebook is considered a “snapshot in time” as part of a spring/summer Indigenous Communities intern project. When available, recurring application deadlines are noted. However, many websites are not updated routinely, so it is suggested applicants reach out by phone or email to the program contact to obtain new application deadlines and information. Although many deadlines provided in this “snapshot” expire soon, the program information remains informative and provides relevant details on available funding programs.

Federal Funds

Ecological Restoration

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (U.S. Department of the Interior)

Program/Grant: FY22 Candidate Species Conservation Fund

Funding Amount: Award ceiling is \$500,00; Award floor is \$1,000

Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement: No

Period of Availability: Applications are accepted on a rolling basis between Dec 21, 2021, and Sep 30, 2022. Electronically submitted applications must be submitted no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time.

Recipients: Federally Recognized Tribes

Description: The principal objective of this Candidate Species Conservation funding opportunity is to accomplish conservation tasks for high priority candidate species (based on the annual Candidate Species Assessments) or other at-risk species in the United States, such that identified threats to the species may be reduced or eliminated. These efforts are based on cooperative relationships with states, non-governmental organizations, private landowners, and those interested in habitat restoration or undertaking candidate and at-risk species research, surveys and monitoring, or educational outreach efforts.

Eligible Uses: Habitat restoration for threatened or endangered species, based on Candidate Species Assessments' list.

How to Apply: Applicants are expected to have demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the biology of the involved candidate or at-risk species and its ecosystem, preferably including having worked with the species in the field. Application is found here:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/search-grants.html>

Contact: Patrick McKenney, patrick_mckenney@fws.gov

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (U.S. Department of Commerce)

Program/Grant: Restoring Tribal Priority Fish Passage through Barrier Removal under the IJA

Funding Amount: Award ceiling is \$5,000,000; Award floor is \$300,000

Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement: No

Period of Availability: Applications are accepted between June 13, 2022, and August 29, 2022.

Recipients: Federal Tribes, Tribal Organizations

Description: This grant is to provide assistance to remove barriers to fish passage for native migratory or sea-run fish. Funding will support projects that include rebuilding productive and sustainable fisheries, contributes to the recovery and conservation of threatened and endangered species, enhances watershed health, promotes resilient ecosystems and communities, and increases tribal capacity to

participate in fish passage barrier removal efforts while improving tribal commercial, recreational, subsistence and cultural practice opportunities.

Eligible Uses: Removing barriers for native migratory or sea-run fish.

How to Apply: Applications are found here: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/search-grants.html>

Contact: Janine Harris, 301-427-8635, infrastructure.tribal@noaa.gov

Program/Grant: NOAA's Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience Grants under the IJA

Funding Amount: Award ceiling is \$15,000,000; Award floor is \$1,000,000

Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement: No

Period of Availability: Applications are accepted from June 28, 2022, through September 6, 2022

Recipients: Federally Recognized Tribes

Description: The principal objective of this funding is to support transformational projects that restore marine, estuarine, coastal, or Great Lakes ecosystems, using approaches that enhance community and ecosystem resilience to climate hazards. Funding will prioritize habitat restoration actions that: demonstrate significant impacts; rebuild productive and sustainable fisheries; contribute to the recovery and conservation of threatened and endangered species; promote climate-resilient ecosystems, especially in tribal or underserved communities; and improve economic vitality, including local employment.

Eligible Uses: Projects must propose work in coastal, marine, or estuarine areas that benefit species or fisheries.

How to Apply: Applications are found here: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/search-grants.html>

Contact: Natalie McLenaghan, 240-614-3192, Marine Habitat Resource Specialist

Program/Grant: FY23 Saltonstall-Kennedy Competition

Funding Amount: Award ceiling is \$300,000; Award floor is \$25,000

Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement: No

Period of Availability: Applications are accepted from May 19, 2022, through October 31, 2022

Recipients: Federally Recognized Tribes

Description: The Saltonstall-Kennedy Act established a fund (known as the S-K fund) used by the Secretary of Commerce to provide grants or cooperative agreements for fisheries research and development projects addressing aspects of U.S. fisheries, including, but not limited to, harvesting, processing, marketing, and associated business infrastructures.

Eligible Uses: Fisheries that included fishery, commercial, recreational, or engaged in by citizens or nationals of the United States.

How to Apply: Applications are found here: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/search-grants.html>

Contact: Desmond Gelman, 503-530-0274; Desmond.Gelman@noaa.gov

Water Infrastructure: Drinking Water, Wastewater, Irrigation Drinking Water-Wastewater

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (U.S. Department of the Interior)

Program/Grant: Water & Wastewater Grants to Alleviate Health Risks on Tribal Lands and Colonia's

Funding Amount: Varies

Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement: Partnerships with other federal, state, and local entities are encouraged; however, a 100% grant may be offered in some circumstances if funds are available.

Period of Availability: Applications accepted on an ongoing basis.

Recipients: Federally Recognized Tribes

Description: This grant provides access to safe reliable drinking water and waste disposal facilities and services to low-income communities that face significant health risks. Funds can be used for construction of basic drinking water and waste disposal systems including storm drainage. Tribal projects also must meet health and safety, per capita and unemployment criteria.

Eligible Uses: Drinking and wastewater disposal systems; storm drainage

How to Apply: Applications are accepted on a rolling basis. Paper applications are accepted, or applicants can register for and use RD Apply. Information is available here:
<http://www.rd.usda.gov/programsservices/rd-apply>

Contact: Tedd Buelow, tedd.buelow@wdc.usda.gov, 720-544-2911, Building 56 Room 2300, Denver, Colorado 80225

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. Department of the Interior)

Program/Grant: Clean Water Indian Set-Aside Grant Program

Funding Amount: Varies; average \$300,000, grants have been awarded between \$16,000 and \$1,600,000

Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement: No

Period of Availability: Open

Recipients: Federally Recognized Tribes

Description: The Clean Water Indian Set-Aside Grant Program (CWISA) provides funding to Indian tribes and Alaska Native Villages for wastewater infrastructure. The CWISA program is administered in cooperation with the Indian Health Service (IHS). The EPA uses the IHS Sanitation Deficiency System priority lists to identify and select projects for CWISA program funding.

Eligible Uses: Drinking and wastewater disposal systems; storm drainage

Previous Projects:

https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/202104/documents/cwisa_report_042221.pdf

How to Apply: Contact the Indian Health Service (IHS) to apply for eligibility:

<https://www.ihs.gov/dsfc/contactus/>. Application information can be found here:

<https://www.epa.gov/small-and-rural-wastewater-systems/clean-water-indian-set-aside-program>

Contact: Region 6 (Salvador Gandara, gandara.salvador@epa.gov and Gilbert Tellez, tellez.gilbert@epa.gov); Region 8 (Bruce Cooper, cooper.bruce@epa.gov and Sallena Rodriguez, rodriguez.sallena@epa.gov); Region 9 (Nancy Sockabasin, sockabasin.nancy@epa.gov)

Drinking Water-Wastewater-Irrigation

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. Department of the Interior)

Program/Grant: Clean Water Infrastructure Resilience and Sustainability Program

Funding Amount: Varies; \$25 million for each fiscal year 2022 through 2026

Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement: A grant under the program shall not exceed 75% of the total cost of the proposed project.

Period of Availability: Varies; Dispersed through each fiscal year

Recipients: Federally Recognized Tribes

Description: Funding for planning, designing, or constructing projects (on a system-wide or area-wide basis) that increase the resilience of a publicly owned treatment works to a natural hazard or cybersecurity vulnerabilities through 1) water conservation, 2) enhancement of water use efficiency, 3) enhancement of wastewater and stormwater management by increasing watershed preservation and protection, 4) modification or relocation of existing publicly owned treatment works that is at risk of being damaged by a natural hazard, 5) development and implementation of projects to increase resilience of publicly owned treatment works to a natural hazard, or 6) enhancement of energy efficiency or use of generation of recovered or renewable energy in management, treatment, or conveyance of wastewater or stormwater.

Eligible Uses: A grant under the program shall be used for planning, designing, or constructing projects (on a system-wide or area-wide basis) that increase resilience of publicly owned treatment works to natural hazards.

How to Apply: To be eligible to receive a grant under the program, an eligible entity shall submit to the Administrator for approval. Application information can be found here:

<https://www.epa.gov/waterfinancecenter/financing-resilient-and-sustainable-water-infrastructure>

Contact: Region 6 (Suzanna M. Perea, perea.suzanna@epa.gov); Region 8 (Stacey Eriksen, eriksen.stacey@epa.gov); Region 9 (Eugene Bromley, bromley.eugene@epa.gov)

Irrigation

Natural Resources Conservation Service (U.S. Department of Agriculture)

Program/Grant: On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials for Federal FY 2022

Funding Amount: Award ceiling is \$5,000,000; Award floor is \$250,000

Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement: Yes

Period of Availability: Applications are accepted between July 25, 2022, through September 22, 2022. Applicants must submit their applications through grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. Eastern time.

Recipients: Federally Recognized Tribes

Description: The On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials serve to stimulate the adoption and evaluation of innovative conservation approaches in partnership with agricultural producers. On-Farm Trial projects may be between 3 and 5 years in duration.

Eligible Uses: Irrigation management technologies; climate smart agricultural solutions; nutrient management; and soil health demonstration

How to Apply: Application can be found here: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/search-grants.html>

Contact: nrcscig@usda.gov

External Capacity: Training, Planning, Management

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (U.S. Department of the Interior)

Program/Grant: WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase 1

Funding Amount: Award ceiling is \$200,000

Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement: No

Period of Availability: Annual opportunity; Notifications for WaterSMART grant announcements: [WaterSMART Program Notifications](#)

Recipients: Federally Recognized Tribes

Description: The WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I funding opportunity is now available from the Bureau of Reclamation to develop a watershed group, complete watershed management planning activities, and design watershed management activities.

Eligible Uses: Watershed group development; watershed restoration planning; and watershed project design

How to Apply: Funding Opportunity Announcement (R22AS00163) was posted to grants.gov

Contact: Brandi Rose, 801-524-3639, Upper Colorado Basin; Ken Isakson, 702-293-8537, Lower Colorado Basin

Program/Grant: WaterSMART Drought Response Program FY24

Funding Amount: Award ceiling is \$5,000,000

Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement: Yes

Period of Availability: Annual opportunity; Details of WaterSMART applications will open between Winter 2022 and Spring 2023. Notifications for WaterSMART grant announcements: [WaterSMART Program Notifications](#)

Recipients: Federally Recognized Tribes

Description: This notice of funding opportunity supports Drought Resiliency Projects that will build long-term resilience to drought and reduce the need for emergency response actions. These projects are generally in the final design stage — environmental and cultural resources compliance may have been initiated, and the non-Federal funding, necessary permits, and other required approvals have been secured.

Eligible Uses: Contingency planning; resiliency projects; emergency response actions

How to Apply: Application can be found here: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/search-grants.html>

Contact: Alisha James, sha-dro-fafoa@usbr.gov

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. Department of the Interior)

Program/Grant: Indian Environmental General Assistance Program (GAP)

Funding Amount: Varies; FY21 Annual GAP Appropriation is \$66,250,000

Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement: Not Specified

Period of Availability: Annual opportunity; Details of GAP applications are announced in November. Notifications for the GAP program: [GAP Program Notifications](#)

Recipients: Federally Recognized Tribes

Description: General Assistance Program grants to federally recognized tribes and tribal consortia for planning, developing and establishing environmental protection programs in Indian country, and for developing and implementing solid and hazardous waste programs on tribal lands.

Eligible Uses: Solid and hazardous waste planning

Previous Projects: [StoryMaps](#)

How to Apply: Application information can be found here: <https://www.epa.gov/tribal/indian-environmental-general-assistance-program-gap>

Contact: Region 6 (Randy Gee, gee.randy@epa.gov and Mark Allen, allen.mark@epa.gov); Region 8 (Kimberly Varilek, varilek.kimberly@epa.gov); Region 9 (Ruben Mojica Hernandez, mojica-hernandez.ruben@@epa.gov)

Program/Grant: Underground Injection Control Grants (UIC): VI wells

Funding Amount: \$50,000,000

Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement: Not Specified

Period of Availability: Annual opportunity; Notifications for UIC grants: [UIC Program Notifications](#)

Recipients: Federally Recognized Tribes

Description: The Underground Injection Control Grants fund federal, state, and Tribal government agencies that oversee underground injection activities to prevent contamination of underground sources of drinking water from fluid injection practices. The funding in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law targets funding to Class VI wells utilized for carbon sequestration. The law includes an additional \$25 million to support the permitting of these wells on top of the \$50 million in grant funding.

Eligible Uses: Any underground sources of drinking water

How to Apply: Applications are accepted on a rolling basis. More information can be found here: [Review the Class VI permit application outline.](#)

Contact: Region 6 (Chris Tingey, tingey.christopher@epa.gov); Region 8 (Martina Wilson, martinawilson@fortpecktribes.net); Region 9 (David Albright, albright.david@epa.gov)

Table 1. Federal funding opportunities for tribal water projects

Program Funders	Program Name	Total Funding Amount (\$)	Cost Share / Matching Requirement
Bureau of Land Management (DOI), Fish and Wildlife Service (DOI), Forest Service (USDA), National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Trinchera Blanca Foundation (The Moore Charitable Foundation)	Southwest Rivers Headwaters 2022	\$950,000	Yes
Bureau of Reclamation (DOI)	Water and Wastewater Grants to Alleviate Health Risks on Tribal Lands and Colonia's	Varies	Yes and No; Varies
Bureau of Reclamation (DOI)	WaterSMART Small-Scale Water Efficiency Projects	\$200,000	Yes
Bureau of Reclamation (DOI)	WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase 1	\$200,000	No
Bureau of Reclamation (DOI)	WaterSMART Drought Response Program FY23	\$5,000,000	Yes
Environmental Protection Agency (DOI)	Clean Water Indian Set-Aside Grant Program	\$1,600,000	No
Environmental Protection Agency (DOI)	Clean Water Infrastructure Resilience and Sustainability Program	\$25,000,000	Yes
Environmental Protection Agency (DOI)	Indian Environmental General Assistance Program (GAP)	\$66,250,000	Not Specified
Fish and Wildlife Service (DOI)	FY22 Candidate Species Conservation Fund	\$500,000	No
Fish and Wildlife Service (DOI)	Partners for Fish and Wildlife FY22	\$750,000	No
Forest Service (USDA)	Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP)	\$360,000	Yes
	Total Funding Amount	\$100,810,000	

Note: Total funding per program does not guarantee a full amount; award ceiling and floor varies.

Philanthropic Foundations

Short List of Tips

1. Private foundations in the United States are required to make their tax filings publicly available and can usually be found online by searching “X Foundation Form 990”. These forms can provide addresses, contact information, and lists of grants awarded, which are helpful to decide whether you think your organization is a good fit, and if so, who you can reach at the foundation to learn more. The forms also disclose a foundation’s assets and the general rule of thumb is the more assets they have, the more capacity they have for giving large grants.
2. Because many private foundations don’t accept unsolicited proposals, using contact information is a great way to share your project/mission/work with the foundation and start to cultivate an invitation to submit a proposal for funding.
3. It is always good to comb a foundation’s website (if they have one) to see if they do review unsolicited proposals and to find out deadlines, criteria, guidelines, budget requirements, etc.
4. Writing grants can be challenging and take a lot of time — however, there are many companies that connect freelance grant writers to nonprofits, which can be a cheaper way to put proposals together. Some companies may even offer pro-bono assistance to nonprofits.

Table 2. Top funders providing grants that exclusively serve Indigenous communities in the Colorado River Basin.

Funder Name	Funder Location	Value in Grants	Subjects Funded	Recipient Projects
The California Endowment	Los Angeles, CA	\$7 Million	Agriculture, fishing, forestry, climate change	View Foundation Maps for Projects Served (Candid)
Walton Family Foundation	Bentonville, AR	\$2.2 Million	Water resources, irrigation, water management	View Foundation Maps for Projects Served (Candid)
The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation	Menlo Park, CA	\$1.7 Million	Environmental and resource rights, sustainable fishing, water pollution, natural resources, sacred sites	View Foundation Maps for Projects Served (Candid)
Meyer Memorial Trust	Portland, OR	\$1 Million	Renewable energy, water resources, water pollution, energy efficiency, diversity and intergroup relations	View Foundation Maps for Projects Served (Candid)
The Carestar Foundation	Berkeley, CA	\$750,000	Environmental health	View Foundation Maps for Projects Served (Candid)
Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation	Palo Alto, CA	\$425,238	Coastal waters, biodiversity, sustainable fishing	View Foundation Maps for Projects Served (Candid)
Carroll Petrie Foundation	New York City, NY	\$387,000	Wildlife biodiversity, sacred sites	View Foundation Maps for Projects Served (Candid)
San Francisco Foundation	San Francisco, CA	\$320,000	Biodiversity, renewable energy, natural resources	View Foundation Maps for Projects Served (Candid)
Dorrance Family Foundation	Scottsdale, AZ	\$250,000	Wildlife biodiversity	View Foundation Maps for Projects Served (Candid)

Note: Funders support environmental projects that may be related to water resources. Grants available over \$200,000 in value for the years 2018-2023.

Appendix

Appendix A: Funding Sources

1. The [Ten Strategies](#) website has been useful to explore new and existing federal funding opportunities under the Infrastructure Investment Jobs Act (IIJA). Funding could support water-related and climate resilience projects in the Colorado River Basin.
2. President Biden's [Building a Better America: A guidebook to the bipartisan infrastructure law for state, local, tribal, and territorial governments, and other partners](#) focuses on drinking water, wastewater, water reuse, conveyance and water storage infrastructure projects.
3. The Environmental Finance Center Network compiled a [Tribal Water and Wastewater Funding Factsheet](#). Most funding opportunities in this factsheet are federal but contain some private sources as well.
4. The University of Oregon has created a large database of funding opportunities for tribes known as the [Tribal Climate Change Guide](#). This is a living database and can be valuable in finding federal, private, and state funding. The Tribal Guide uses a keyword tool to help identify specific priorities.

Appendix B: Tribal Water Priorities

The Water & Tribes Initiative (WTI) conducted a study to gather water priorities in the Colorado River Basin. Table 2 in [Enhancing Tribal Water Resource Management Capacity in the Colorado River Basin: A Baseline Assessment, Interim Report December 2021](#) lists the top water priorities among tribes interviewed. These priorities coincide with WRA's mission: protecting Western lands and restoring degraded river systems to safeguard water supplies for communities, agriculture, and wildlife. Categories in this guidebook are organized and influenced by WTI's work and the tribes who participated. The WTI expect to finalize the interim report soon.