



## VSP Capital Funding 2023-25 Biennium

### Tips for Successfully Funding a VSP Cost-Share Project

The WA State Conservation Commission (SCC) is now accepting cost-share applications for [Voluntary Stewardship Program \(VSP\)](#) projects. Funding is now open and proposals will be considered on a monthly basis.

#### **Projects need to be completed by June 30, 2025.**

This opportunity provides funding for on-the-ground conservation projects that protect the [five critical areas](#) — wetlands, areas that recharge aquifers used for potable water, fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, frequently flooded areas, and geologically hazardous areas — while maintaining agricultural viability. Proposed projects must meet a VSP county work plan goal or benchmark, be in a VSP watershed, seek to address salmon habitat resource needs/impacts, use Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) standards and specifications, and be approved prior to submittal by the county VSP work group.

Project proposals must comply with the approved [VSP Capital Funding Guidelines \(Guidelines\)](#). The guidelines include VSP-specific criteria and utilize [existing SCC grant procedures](#), including the [SCC's Grant and Contract Procedure Manual](#) and the [Conservation Practice Data System \(CPDS\)](#). All proposals need to be entered into the SCC's CPDS system to be considered for funding and recipients need to be trained in SCC's grants and contracts procedures.

#### **Keys to Submitting VSP Proposals**

Each month, SCC staff on the project review committee will pull a list of VSP project proposals from CPDS for consideration. Only completed applications in CPDS will be considered by the project review committee—all VSP-specific questions need to be answered and all issues identified below must be resolved.

The project review committee has noticed a few common errors that prevent proposals from being considered for funding. Those include:

- The VSP county work group must approve the project prior to its submittal for it to be considered by the project review committee.
- All proposals must answer a specific set of VSP-related questions in the funding tab in CPDS. Incomplete answers will result in the rejection of the proposal, fewer points being awarded to the proposal, or may result in the proposal not being funded. The complete list of questions is available in the [Guidelines](#) and in CPDS.
- Please check for data errors at the time of entry in CPDS. For instance, forgetting to indicate that a project has been approved by the county work group or that it is “ready for funding” will result in the committee not being able to approve the proposal at that time. Errors may cause delay in the awarding of funds.

- At the SCC May 2023 commission meeting, the commission supported an increase in the landowner cost-share cap in the 2023-25 biennium from \$50,000 to \$100,000. Details in the updated SCC Grant and Contract Policy and Procedure Manual. This means \$100,000 per landowner, per fiscal year, for all SCC programs combined. Please work with the landowner, farmer, rancher, or cooperator to make sure that the \$100,000 maximum is not exceeded through a VSP project or in combination with other SCC cost-share they may be receiving. If you have any questions about the landowner limit, please contact SCC Grant Manager, [Courtney Woods](#).
- To garner the most points for projects that are clustered together, please remember that the focus of this question in the Guidance is on projects with other landowners, farmers, ranchers, and cooperators, not the same landowner who is seeking cost-share funding for the current project. Explaining how the project addresses salmon habitat resource needs/impacts or similar natural resource concerns will also earn more points.
- The “*Contact Person*” field in CPDS is the name of the county or conservation district staff person entering the proposal into CPDS, and not the landowner, farmer, rancher, or cooperator. The landowner, farmer, rancher, or cooperator should be entered under the “*Participant Name*” field in CPDS. The “*Contact Person*” is the person that SCC will contact to notify if funds are awarded or if there is an issue with the application.

### How guidelines were developed

SCC is committed to supporting private landowners’ voluntary stewardship of natural resources through VSP. The guidelines were drafted by SCC staff after the legislature appropriated \$3,000,000 in supplemental capital funds for VSP to be used in the remaining FY 22-23 biennium (ending on June 30, 2023). SCC staff drafted the Guidelines in early April 2022. SCC held a [webinar](#) to review and seek input on the draft on May 25, 2022.

The VSP Technical Panel and Statewide Advisory Committee discussed the draft Guidelines at the [June 9, 2022 meeting](#) and suggested amendments. The draft Guidelines were then made available for comment through July 1, 2022. Comments and amendments were incorporated into [the final version of the Guidelines](#) approved by the SCC at the [July 21, 2022 meeting](#).

Staff updated guidelines to reflect new funding in July 2023.

### Questions?

- For general questions about VSP projects and funding opportunities, please contact [Bill Eller](#) or [Karla Heinitz](#).
- For questions about CPDS, please contact Grants Manager, [Courtney Woods](#), 360-407-6114.
- If you are having CPDS entry issues, please contact [Brian Cochrane](#) or Grants Manager, [Courtney Woods](#), 360-407-6114.
- For training in SCC’s grants and contracts procedures, please contact [Karla Heinitz](#).

SCC and the VSP project review committee look forward to receiving your proposals. For more information, please consider how the project fits in the [Guidelines](#) and review the [VSP website](#) for the link to the Notice of Funding Opportunity, webinar recordings, and other additional resources.