



## CWI 2017: The Reboot FAQs

### Guidance:

- Where is the guidance on the website?
  - Leah posted all guidance and application documents onto the CWI Grants website (<http://in.gov/isda/2374.htm>) on March 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- Where can I find a copy of the SSCB business plan?
  - The SSCB website (<http://in.gov/isda/2361.htm>).
- Where can I find the match standards?
  - These are located on the last page of the guidance document.
- When was the new business plan adopted?
  - January 2016
- What are the goals listed on the SSCB business plan?
  - **Soil Health/Degradation** which includes but isn't limited to, soil biology impacts that degrade soil quality, the loss of top soil due to water and wind erosion, the depletion of organic matter, as well as soil compaction.
  - **Water Quality and Quantity** including sediment, nutrients, pesticides, E-coli and other non-point sources of water pollution found in our streams, rivers and lakes as well as supply and flooding.
  - **Invasive Species**, both flora and fauna
  - **Other soil and water related natural resources** concerns including forest lands, wildlife habitat areas and protection, pasture and forage lands and air quality.
- Is it still a requirement to have more than one district?
  - No- Single district proposals are allowed. Be sure to clearly explain why you are applying as a single district.
- Are the partners limited to partner districts or can it be other partners?
  - All partners, both districts and external partners need to be listed in the partner section.
- Does the three-year restriction apply only to projects funded through CWI?
  - Yes. Only count projects that were funded using CWI toward these records.
- How do the three-year restrictions on cost share work per field? Do multiple projects count as multiple years? Does the three year cap per field only affect years going forward (i.e. 2017-2019)?
  - The three-year restriction is per project regardless of CWI grant. This includes any previous CWI grants, but is only enforced in 2017 grants and moving forward. Grants

awarded before 2017 do not have this restriction in place. For example a producer who received 2 years of cover crop funding on a 2015 CWI grant would only be able to receive 1 year of funding from a 2017 CWI grant for the same field. A producer who received funding previously for one year of cover crops and in a different year funding for a soil test would still have two years remaining for each project. If a district has records of previous CWI grant cost share recipients, these would need to be considered when awarding cost share for 2017 grants. CWI funds are encouraged to be used for producers new to the program.

- Can the cost share for the same producer but with different fields?
  - Yes. The restriction is only on specific fields.
- Is this three-year restriction essentially forever, or say three years in ten?
  - As of this time it is three years forever, but the policy will be reevaluated annually when the guidance is developed.
- How does three-year restriction work with practices that are necessarily per field (i.e. forestry)?
  - In these cases, the SWCD can determine what is considered to be a "field".
- Can you come up with a spreadsheet to track cost share field participants?
  - ISDA will develop a template that may be adopted by districts but will not be required. Tracking will be a local responsibility.
- Does CWI have a standard cost share rate or do SWCDs determine that?
  - CWI funds can be used to cost share up to 75% of a practice cost or \$20 per acre for cover crops. Districts have discretion to set rates lower than these amounts to further spread funding.
- Who polices the three year restriction on cost share?
  - It is ultimately self-policed but will be noted by ISDA during grant reviews.
- Why are research projects excluded in CWI?
  - Indiana Code 14-32 states that SWCDs are prohibited from doing research except in conjunction with Purdue. Rather than ensuring that Purdue is involved, it is cleaner to exclude all research from CWI.
- Who do I ask if I am concerned that my project may be considered research?
  - Direct questions about research to Leah, and she will take your question to the grants committee.
- Can a district that wants to use grant funds to contract with a technician pay them more than what is listed on the match standards?
  - Yes. The match standards are only applicable for calculating in kind match. The guidance does not specify a contractor's compensation.
- Can CWI funds be used on both private and public lands?
  - Yes.
- Can CWI funds be used for crop scouting?
  - Yes. See Ripley SWCD's 2015 and 2016 grants.
- Will we be able to vary from following NRCS specs?
  - No. The ICP MOU says that all agencies must follow FOTG standards for conservation projects. If a standard does not exist for a specific practice, specs must be approved by the state engineer.
- Can you define what you mean by priority areas?

- A priority area is the specific region of focus for the district's grant proposal. This could be a specific watershed or area of the county where the district thinks grant funds would best be spent.
- Is there a preference as far as ranking cost share applications vs. first come first serve?
  - Cost share programs are typically considered stronger when they show a strategic process for selecting recipients. This helps to ensure that our limited grant funds are getting to those producers where it can be put to its best use.
- Would using a cost share ranking system potentially knock out some producers who submitted early applications that were intending to get funding?
  - Districts utilizing ranking systems should be up front with producers who submit cost share applications. By submitting a cost share application, that does not guarantee funding, very similar to a competitive grant process. All applications will be reviewed after a specified date and funding decisions made at that time.
- What is the 2/3 done requirement?
  - For CWI, the guidance states that a project must be 66% complete before the districts can apply for another grant to extend the program. This 66% can be either in time (2 years) or in funding. For example if you have a greater demand than anticipated and spend 66% of your grant amount in the first year of the grant term, you may apply for another grant following the first year and do not need to wait until the end of year 2. This needs to be documented in your SharePoint financial and progress report.
- Is how much cash match you put forward looked at?
  - Match is important in the scoring process, particularly when proposals are similar.
- Are the match rates in the guidance a little low?
  - Yes. We realize that the match rates in the guidance are probably low. To calculate these rates, ISDA looked into SWCD employee compensation and determined an average. Because ISDA could only search for SWCD employees' salaries, this is the only metric used to calculate this standard match rate. Benefits and other compensation that an SWCD employee may receive was not factored into the match rate. Even if the rates are conservative, all SWCDs will be on a level playing field because these match rates must be used when developing proposals.
- Would you rather see CWI or district funds spent on a field day?
  - Ultimately this is up to the grantee. Having field day events can get people in the door and get conservation off the ground.
- Can you build on past projects if they've done well?
  - Yes.
- Is there an in-kind match standard?
  - Please see the guidance for in-kind proposal development.
- How are the in-kind standards calculated?
  - In-kind rates for SWCD staff are calculated using salaries only.
- How are professional services classified?
  - Paying someone from outside your staff and outside the partnership for their help with a program/project. As far as match standards go, it seems that using a level playing field isn't really favored in this particular group. Something to consider moving forward, or if there are any future efforts to look at these standards again.
- Is there an equipment use allowance for projects?
  - The Lieutenant Governor's office is uncomfortable with this because it involves producers creating their own invoice. ISDA is exploring how to best address this situation.
- How do you explain a single district option?

- Really explain it in terms of the project. Maybe your district has different business plan goals than surrounding districts. Maybe your priority watershed falls solely within your county.
- Where can I find the match standards?
  - These standards are on the back page of the guidance.
- Can CWI funds be used for advertising/meals/promotional events?
  - CWI funds should be used to further conservation in the state. They can be used for field days and educational events but cannot be used for promotional materials or meals.
- Is cost share on equipment modification allowable?
  - Yes.

### **Application:**

- Who do I contact if I have issues with the web tool?
  - Please contact Leah Harmon ([lharmone2@isda.in.gov](mailto:lharmone2@isda.in.gov)) or Trevor Laureys ([tlaureys@isda.in.gov](mailto:tlaureys@isda.in.gov)).
- Do I have to complete the online application in one sitting?
  - The application does not have a save button so all information must be added to it in one editing session. But the application does not time out so as long as your browser window remains open, your information will remain in the form. If you have used the word document template, copying and pasting your responses into the web tool should not take much time.
- How much detail should be provided for a partner's point of contact?
  - Name, phone number and email. This should be sufficient to prove that you have worked with the partner.
- What could the attachments be?
  - Attachments can be anything that you feel would benefit the grants committee in knowing more about your grant. This could include but is not limited to: letters of support from partners, example cost share applications, example cost share ranking systems, success stories of previous programs, relevant parts of your SWCD business plan, etc.
- If you feel you need to go over the character limit, can you expand on the questions in the attachments?
  - Yes. Please be sure to reference which question is being answered.
- Do you still have the District Deadline Verification Tool Form and award bonus points for supervisors attending things?
  - The district deadline verification tool has been eliminated from the process. District must still meet the deadlines specified in the guidance. The DSS team will track these deadlines and notify districts if they are ineligible. Deadlines and or trainings not specified in code or in contract but listed in the grant guidance can be used as a tiebreaker.
- Can you copy and paste from Word into the web tool?
  - Yes. You can copy and paste directly from the word document template into the online application.
- Will the applications be put online so that other districts can see them?
  - All applications will not be put online so that all districts can see them. Like in previous cycles, funded applications will be put on SharePoint for reference.

- What programs should be considered for the uniqueness question?
  - Some programs to consider: NRCS, ISDA, local cost share, 319, LARE. This list is not exhaustive.
- What are you looking for in the uniqueness section?
  - Not duplicating efforts. If programs are available in a particular district/region and are not being taken advantage of, it would not be in the SSCB's best interest to fund a similar program with their limited grant funds.
- How do I know if my project is unique in comparison to those being submitted across the state?
  - This question really relates to programming and resources available to a single district or group of districts. We are trying not to step on any of our partner's toes. Your proposal may be similar to another district in another region of the state and that is perfectly fine.
- Do you list partners on both the partner section and budget page?
  - Yes. The partner involvement question provides a qualitative view of how the partners are going to assist with the project. The budget page shows financial and in kind support from partners. Both are valuable when developing and scoring proposals.
- Who would be considered partners?
  - Partners would include partnering districts or other external entities that are involved directly in the project. If an organization's sole involvement in the project is allowing you to post a flyer in their building, they would not be considered a partner.
- What is briefly describing role in the project?
  - Provide the point of contact and any relevant information that you think should be there.
- Who do we list as the contact... the secretary?
  - The district should list the person at the partnering organization that they have been working on for the proposal.
- So if you were doing a multi-county project, do you list contacts for each county (e.g. Extension)?
  - This is really up to the district(s) and what they believe is relevant for the committee to review their proposal. The partner involvement question does not have a character limit so a limited amount of space is not a factor when determining who to list.
- Is there an issue with submitting anything on Chrome?
  - The web application should work in Chrome. Our tests have no shown any issues with particular browsers.
- Why do questions have character limits?
  - Questions on the application have character limits to ensure fairness amongst all SWCDs. By having a character limit, districts must be concise when describing their project. It also helps the grants committee score proposals because each proposal can be read and scored in a reasonable amount of time.
- Can a district submit multiple applications?
  - An SWCD may only be lead on one proposal per year, but can be a participating district on multiple applications.
- Is the word document formatted the same as the web application?
  - Yes.
- Do spaces count as characters?
  - Yes.
- How can we determine effectiveness? Is this a call to do an end of event survey or something similar?

- That could be used. Effectiveness could also be included in cost share rankings and load reductions, among other things. This is very situation based (i.e. weather).
- So the budget is just formatted a little differently. We still have to include the partner involvement?
  - Yes. SWCDs should still include their partners' funds and in kind match on the budget section.
- Can we include our business plan as an attachment?
  - Yes. However, many business plans may be longer than the 5 pages allowed as attachments. A district may only want to include relevant sections or pages of their business plan as an attachment.
- Can you print the application before you submit it?
  - Yes. It will print like any other website.
- Do I have to use the entire character limit?
  - A district should provide enough information to accurately describe their project. Don't talk in circles but provide all of the information you need to.
- Do you need to fill out every budget column for every entity?
  - No. Only fill out what is appropriate.
- Can I expand on the budget details in an attachment?
  - Yes.

**Process:**

- Will there be fewer projects awarded?
  - Not necessarily. It all depends on what applications ask for. There may be some applications for larger projects but there may also be proposals for less than \$75,000. With a cap, districts will back into it since grant writing is inherently a game. The SSCB does have the discretion to award partial funding.
- Can you apply for more than one project?
  - An SWCD may only be lead on one application per year; however districts are more than welcome to be a participating district on a different project with another county. The projects must be different. Two applications from the same group of districts covering the same project(s) will not be accepted.
- If you are the lead on a CWI grant one year, can you be the lead district on another grant?
  - If the original grant is at least 66% complete (by funding spent) a district can apply for another CWI grant as lead for the same type of project. If the district has another project to apply for CWI funds, they may even if the current project is less than 66% spent.
- Should we have already been notified if we are ineligible?
  - The grants program manager has notified districts that have been determined to be ineligible for the 2017 round of CWI grants.
- If you are ineligible to be a lead district, can you still participate on a grant.
  - Yes.
- Do funds come by February 1<sup>st</sup> since the initial report is due July 31<sup>st</sup>?
  - All grant projects will start on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017. ISDA will make an effort to get funds to the districts as quickly as we can. However, funds cannot be dispersed until the grant agreement is fully executed and a claim voucher is received. Each of these documents takes approximately 45 days to process. ISDA will begin the necessary paperwork to disperse funding shortly after the grants are approved by the full SSCB in October.

- Is there any more information on the scoring for competitive grants? In the past it has been pretty generic questions with a ranking 1 to 5? How will these new applications be scored? Will there be a scoring matrix?
  - ISDA and the grants committee is still working on developing the scorecard for 2017 CWI. We anticipate that scoring this year will be more generic because we do not know how the new proposals will work. We would hate to have to score a good proposal low based upon preconceived metrics on the new scorecard. Keep in mind that the grants committee is really looking for how well districts answer the questions on the application and tell the story of their project.
- What about district success stories? When is that deadline?
  - ISDA is working with our website administrators to get the 2015 district success stories up and running. When that site is available, the DSS team will notify districts.
- Does the Board have a tracking sheet for tracking in-kind?
  - Districts should develop their own spreadsheets for tracking match, both cash and in-kind.
- What communication should you have if you are having issues spending the money?
  - Call Leah ASAP! Keep her in the loop. The more Leah is aware of what is going on the better she can address the situation. Regular updates are a plus (monthly or quarterly reports) Leah should be involved sooner rather than later.
- If 3 counties are working together and the lead county is late in reporting, are all 3 counties ineligible?
  - Ultimately the lead county is responsible for reporting. The lead will be the one declared ineligible. But it should be noted that anyone can update the SharePoint reports.
- Can you explain the process of payment?
  - Contract emailed to district, chairman signed, hard copy mailed back to me, signature process, 45 days later it comes back, after that you can submit claim for 50%, can be scanned and emailed, another 45 days, total process at least 90 days
- Can you claim beyond the initial 50% as you go?
  - Once you spend beyond the initial 50% you can submit claims quarterly as reimbursement. Anything after the initial 50% must be processed as reimbursement and needs to include an updated SharePoint report.
- What is considered the grant year?
  - January 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup>
- Are there penalties if they don't spend the money?
  - If a district is meeting the goals and keeping Leah informed, the Division cannot take exception to not spending all the money. If a district is just sitting on the money without meeting project goals, it will be penalized.
  - Who makes that decision?
    - Leah, the CWI grants committee, and the SSCB.
- Where does the money go if it doesn't get spent in CWI grants? Does it go back to the State general fund?
  - No it will remain in CWI grants.
- Who can approve design of CWI projects?
  - Whoever has engineering authority for that specific project.
- As far as FOTG standards are concerned, is there any variation allowed? Are seed tags required for cover crops?

- All CWI projects must follow FOTG standards if a standard exists. For cover crops, if a seed tag is required by FOTG, then you must have a seed tag.
- For CWI 2016 and before, are adult education funds and match intended for SWCDs to educate the public or for SWCD staff/supervisor training?
  - The adult education funds are intended for SWCDs to host education events. For SWCD staff/supervisor training please look into the CWI training/reimbursement funds that are offered.
- Can you count NRCS time or other federal funds as match?
  - Yes. Since CWI is state funding, a district can count federal funds as match, both as cash and in-kind where appropriate.
- What does the non-reverting fund mean in terms of competitive grants?
  - With CWI being a non-reverting fund, there is less pressure to make sure that every last penny is spent each and every year. If CWI was a reverting fund, it would be easy to fall into the same old tried and true methods for spending the money. A non-reverting fund allows SWCDs to take more risks when applying for funding. There is nothing wrong with trying something new and it not working out as you expected, so long as the district has made an effort. If a district has not made efforts to spend funds in accordance with their grant agreement, there will be repercussions.
- How can you consider a project effective without spending all of the money?
  - An unprecedented project has no road map for success. Some items may not end up costing as much money as you anticipate. Other partners may step up to the plate. If a project can reach or even exceed their goals and not spend all of the money, I would call that project effective.
- Will an application rank higher if it addresses multiple resource concerns?
  - Applications should address at minimum 2 resource concerns as listed in the SSCB business plan. Application that relate more closely to the business plan will in theory rank higher than those that do not.
- What should I do if my grant is not going according to plan?
  - Contact Leah and your DSS immediately. Issues can be handled relatively easily if ISDA is brought into the loop early. If you let an issue go, we may not be able to fix it. It never hurts to pick up the phone and ask Leah a question.
- Are district supervisors considered employees for E-verify purposes?
  - It has been ISDA's position that all SWCDs in the state comply with E-verify for all supervisors.

### **Scoring and Selection:**

- Even if you are "blind scoring", when you review grants, you will know where it comes from by the location in the description?
  - The team will work to scrub all identifying details from every application. This will allow the scoring committee to be more objective when reading applications, rather than subconsciously allowing knowledge about the district affect the score.
- What does the process between scoring to selection look like?
  - After each proposal is individually score by each DSS, grants committee member, and outside scorer, the grants program manager will calculate a total score for each proposal. Once these scores are tallied, proposals are given an initial ranking. After the initial ranking, the grants committee meets in person to discuss the proposals. They start at the top of the initial rankings and work their way down. This discussion is where

the committee could award any discretionary points or choose to partially fund a proposal. ISDA works with the accounting department from the Lieutenant Governor's office to determine the total amount available for grant awards. Following the committee's in person discussion, the grants program manager will determine, based upon funding availability and the committee's funding recommendations, how many proposals receive funding and present them to the full SSCB for final approval.

- Does the SSCB typically accept the grants committee's recommendations?
  - The full board will discuss and ask questions about the proposals during the October board meeting. The board does have the authority to reject the committee's recommendations.
- Will the attachments be looked at for every application if they are used as a tiebreaker?
  - Yes. Attachments will be made available to the scoring committee from the time applications are submitted.
- Who will review applications?
  - The CWI grants committee, the DSS team, and a few outside scorers
- Who is on the grants committee?
  - Warren Baird, Bob Eddleman, Robert Woodling
- Would it help the process if districts were mindful of the scrubbing of applications when writing the proposal?
  - It is fairly difficult to write an application with no identifying details. ISDA will handle blacking out all the identifying details.
- Is the scorecard available?
  - No.
- How will the blind scoring process work?
  - Applications will come directly to the [Cleanwaterindiana@isda.in.gov](mailto:Cleanwaterindiana@isda.in.gov) email address. Once received the ISDA program manager along with a resource specialist will remove identifying details from proposals. This information can include but is not limited to: county/district names, watersheds, etc. No information relevant to the project or narrative will be changed. Proposals will be identified simply as "Proposal A- 4 districts" or similar. Once the applications are "scrubbed" of these details, they will be made available to the scoring committee for review. The scoring committee consists of the CWI grants committee, the DSS team, a representative from the Lieutenant Governor's Office grant services team, and other outside scorers. The only person that will know definitively which district a proposal belongs to will be that district's DSS, if they were involved in proposal development.
  - Blind scoring helps to reduce biases in the scoring and selection process. It is human nature to put a person's thoughts and/or background knowledge about a project into their decision making process when considering a specific grant proposal. By not knowing which proposal belongs to which district or group of districts, the scoring committee is really focusing on what is written in the proposal rather than perception of district needs.
  - Once all of the proposals are scored by the scoring committee, the grant committee will meet in person to make recommendations for funding. This is where each application will be identified by the actual district(s) involved.
- Does the blind scoring process take away the SSCB/grants committee's discretion?
  - No. Discretion is still available to the CWI grants committee when deciding which projects to recommend and the recommendation to partially fund a proposal. The full SSCB still has the discretion to reject the committee's recommendations.
- How are the attachments used in the scoring process?

- We believe at this time, the attachments will be used primarily as a tie breaker. The scoring process is still being developed. Scoring committee members will have access to all attachments when scoring applications and may consider them in initial rankings.
- Is the SSCB meeting where grants are awarded a public meeting?
  - Yes.

### **Reporting:**

- Are there any resources available to help new lead districts complete these reports?
  - Claim Vouchers: <https://youtu.be/zlD5wuauOAM>
  - Cover Letter and Grant Agreements: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07LFUHRcS1c>
  - Scoring and Selection: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TyrfPVDjivQ>
  - Reviews <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2PvII1xh6zQ>
  - Reporting <http://youtu.be/CcukvJ5n828>
  - AFR 2016: <http://youtu.be/zJirix3rCU4>
- Should I write over what is on current reports for subsequent reports?
  - Districts should replace the dollar figures for reports for year 2 and year 3. For the summary section, SWCDs can add more to the end of the section. The more information you can provide in the summary the better.
- In our SharePoint report, do we just update the dollar figures.
  - When you update the financial and progress reports, please update the dollar figures, goals, and summary sections at a minimum.
- Why did you change the reporting to every six months rather than annually?
  - With the turnover in staff that districts are experiencing throughout the state, the grants committee and ISDA made the decision to change reporting to every six months.
- Does the 6 month reporting just start with 2017 grants?
  - Yes. Any new policies as stated in the guidance are only for 2017 and moving forward.
- Is it ok my RS enters the info on SharePoint?
  - That's fine but ultimately the district is accountable for reporting.
- When are quarterly reports due?
  - In an effort to capture all of the work completed in a given quarter, reporting is due 30 days after the end of the quarter (January, April, July, October).
- Since the SSCB has voted to make districts ineligible if they are behind in reporting, how does that work? Is it solely the lead district or are participating districts affected?
  - Ultimately the lead district is the one who is held accountable to ISDA and the SSCB for reporting purposes. It should be noted however that participating districts are able to update the SharePoint report. ISDA encourages communication amongst partnering districts to get these reports completed.

### **Reviews:**

- Does ISDA review every county?
  - ISDA selects 10 grants to review each year.

### **For further information please contact:**

Leah Harmon  
 Clean Water Indiana Program Manager  
[Lharmon2@isda.in.gov](mailto:Lharmon2@isda.in.gov)  
 317-607-4127

## Example Budget

### Example Scenario

Three districts A, B, and C are developing a grant proposal together with District A serving as lead. The proposal is for a pollinator and filter strip program with funding going toward cost share as well as an educator. The educator's workload would be divided amongst the three districts. The cost share rate for these practices is 50%.

### Budget Information

Please fill out the following table with your project budget:

Entity/Type of Expense	CWI Funds Requested	Cash Match	In Kind Match
SWCDs-educator	\$40,000		
SWCDs-pollinators	\$20,000		
SWCDs- filter strips	\$15,000		
SWCDs- field day	\$1,000		
District A		\$10,000	\$5,000
District B		\$5,000	\$5,000
District C		\$5,000	\$5,000
Producers			\$35,000

In this example, if the grants committee chose to partially fund the proposal (i.e. only the educator and pollinators), it would be much easier and clearer to cut the line items for filter strips and the field day than to try to determine through an aggregated cost share line item. By not dividing the cost share items between the three districts, it is also easier to utilize the funding when they are needed and in demand. The division of funds between participating districts is an internal policy.

For the match, I suggest aggregating the match for each district as well as significant partner groups. This also helps when figuring total match because you are not committing yourself to a certain amount of match for a specific line item. It makes meeting the goals of the project and the terms of the contract more flexible.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about CWI competitive grants. I am more than happy to provide an assistance that I can.