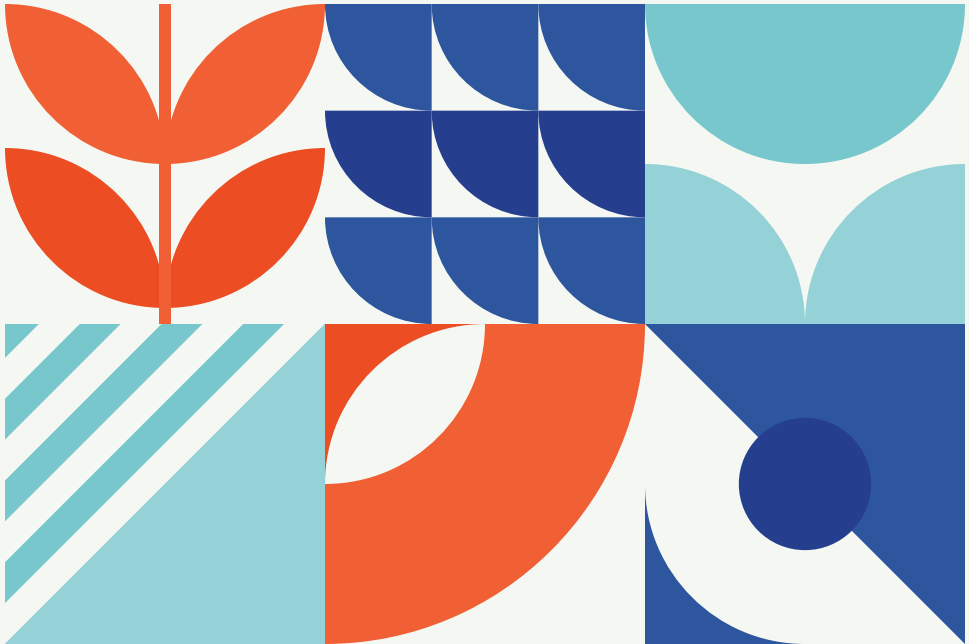


A COMMUNITY APPROACH TO

# **PLANNING FOR + INVESTING IN OUR WORKING LANDS FOR REGIONAL RESILIENCE**

A guide to inspire collaboration, spark ideas, + build actionable strategies

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NOVEMBER 2019



# WHAT IS SALC?

The Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALC) utilizes Cap-and-Trade proceeds to assist local agencies in developing robust agricultural land preservation plans and policies.



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# **SALC's mission is to support California's need for agricultural conservation, economic growth, and sustainable development.**

Since 2014, SALC has funded projects that protect at-risk agricultural lands from conversion to more pollution-heavy land uses such as residential or commercial development. The program provides two types of awards:

**Planning Grants** and **Agricultural Conservation Easement Grants**.

A community visioning and planning process that supports the development of local and regional land use policies and economic development strategies is fundamental to ensuring the long-term viability and protection of critical working lands. The **Planning Grant** program provides funds to establish and implement goals, policies, and objectives that support the local agricultural sector. It also supports planning processes to identify and designate priority lands for conservation and development. This guidebook can help project leads design the visioning and planning process.

**Use this quick guide to spark ideas and actions!**



# OVERVIEW

How do we simultaneously reduce GHG's, preserve agricultural areas, and provide housing and economic development?

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## **No sector of the state's economy has a greater stake in how and where communities grow than agriculture.**

The conservation of agricultural lands can help guide efficient urban development, avoid increased greenhouse gas emissions, contribute to a sustainable water supply and provide a multitude of other benefits. When managed sustainably, agricultural lands can improve environmental quality while reducing health burdens on the communities that surround them.

Yet, for the last three decades, California has seen a loss of an average of 50,000 acres a year of agricultural land. The loss of this land, especially to urban and suburban development, also contributes to rising greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Studies show that urbanized land produces 70 times more greenhouse gases than farmland and that protecting farmland provides one of the best opportunities to capture carbon in the land base.





**SALC Planning Grants provide resources to communities to develop long-range visions for their agricultural economy and determine effective ways to ensure its future viability.**

**The SALC planning approach is intended to bring together multiple stakeholder groups to envision a viable agricultural economy alongside some of the most pressing inter-related community goals, as diagrammed below:**

**Connect the dots! Multi-benefit solutions are part of the vision for the future of agriculture in your region.**





# **APPLYING FOR A SALC GRANT**

**The Power of Partnerships - Identifying Local  
Champions and Shared Community Goals**



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## Where do we begin?

TO SUCCEED, YOUR PROJECT NEEDS CHAMPIONS.



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**Local Agricultural  
Landowners**



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**Agency Decision  
Makers**



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**Key Community  
Partners**

Local agricultural landowners, agency decision makers, and key community partners are vital. Become one, identify others, and define your common goals. This is important as a first step because bringing together a range of interests early on, will not only help with the coordination of the project but will allow a **comprehensive community vision to take shape.**

## Some stakeholder groups and interests to consider include:

<b>CHAMPIONS + PARTNERS</b>	<b>DIVERSITY OF INTERESTS + ISSUES</b> How do these intersect with agricultural viability, sustainable development and land conservation?
Agricultural Organizations (i.e. Farm Bureau, CWA, commodity boards, Farmer's Guild, Food System Alliances)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Economic viability for farmers</li> <li>» Access to markets</li> <li>» Entry points for new farmers</li> </ul>
Agricultural Landowners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Economic viability</li> <li>» Environmental stewardship</li> <li>» Succession planning</li> </ul>
County Board of Supervisors and City Council Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Affordable housing</li> <li>» Community and Economic development</li> <li>» Community health and well-being</li> </ul>
Local Agency Formation Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Balancing urban growth with agricultural preservation</li> </ul>
County and City Planning Departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Land use and transportation policy</li> <li>» Economic development</li> <li>» Climate action</li> <li>» Fire Risk and Mitigation</li> </ul>
Water Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Local water supply and conservation</li> <li>» Sustainable groundwater management</li> <li>» Drought response</li> </ul>
Resource Conservation Districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Soil and water quality</li> <li>» Carbon sequestration and other ecosystem services</li> </ul>
Land Trusts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Long-term agricultural and open space protection for future generations</li> </ul>
Environmental Justice Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Air quality</li> <li>» Water quality</li> <li>» Community food security</li> <li>» Secure and safe housing</li> </ul>



## CREATING

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Quality community engagement is about creating a genuine opportunity to engage partners with various perspectives and needs in the community that can collectively “co-create” a regional vision for the area with key partners.



## ENGAGING

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Engaging agricultural landowners and organizations representing agricultural interests from the beginning provides all stakeholders with a deeper understanding of the local challenges that landowners and farmers face to keep their land in farming and remain economically viable. These issues should be at the forefront of ongoing dialogue.



## CONNECTING

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Convening partners and connecting the dots between agricultural viability, land conservation, sustainable development, and various community issues helps to build the initial project concept.





# APPLYING FOR A SALC GRANT

Below is sample language for an invitation to use as you start your Stakeholder and Partnership Outreach:

## ***Will our County retain a viable agricultural economy into the future?***

*With water and labor shortages, regulations, climate change, market pressures, invasive pests, land costs and other issues facing our farming neighbors, how will we co-create a prosperous community that maintains its agricultural roots?*

*To answer these questions, we are inviting a broad cross-section of our community including farmers, local agencies, and many others to develop a long-range vision for how agriculture, housing, and economic development can be balanced and enhanced to create the future we want.*

*The Sustainable Agricultural Land Conservation program (SALC) is a grant program administered by the Strategic Growth Council and implemented by the California State Department of Conservation that utilizes Cap-and-Trade proceeds to protect agricultural lands at risk of conversion to other uses. The program's planning grants provide funding to develop and implement goals, policies, and objectives that support the conservation and economic viability of the local agricultural sector while also addressing other community challenges such as housing, water supply, and climate change.*

*We invite you to help shape a vision and plan. Your participation in this process will help to build meaningful, actionable collaboration. We are seeking representatives from the county, cities, agricultural organizations, land trusts, the LAFCO and other special districts, community-based organizations, and others to provide a voice and perspective that will contribute to the dialogue as we form our grant application, and if awarded, will guide the work going forward.*

*As a first step in identifying issues to address for the SALC grant and to identify potential partnerships, we invite you to attend a meeting.*

*[insert place, date and time]*





# APPLYING FOR A SALC GRANT

Collaborative Concept Development for a SALC Project

**DIVERSITY OF  
INTERESTS AND ISSUES**

**INTERDEPENDENCE OF  
INTERESTS AND ISSUES**



Dialogue + Reciprocity + Relationships + Learning + Creativity



**SHARED MEANING  
+  
INNOVATION**

## IDENTIFY

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The beginning of building a vision and plan starts with an initial **collaborative process** where partners and stakeholders identify community strengths, assets, key challenges and priorities for agriculture in the region.

## EXPLORE

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Explore how a SALC project might complement and/or **leverage other planning efforts** in your region.

## SHARE

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Start with a partner and stakeholder meeting to share a **diversity of interests**, understand where there is an intersection of interests, and through dialogue, identify the community issues that a SALC project would address.

## DEVELOP

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Develop **relationships** with key decision-makers, agency representatives and community stakeholders who could participate in the proposed project and determine the level of participation and how to get them engaged.

## DOCUMENT

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**Document** existing planning policies, initiatives, maps and data that address agricultural viability. **Learn** what's working, what's not working and for whom it's working or not working. What data and mapping is missing that would help inform a community vision?

## CREATE

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Create a **framework** that describes the economic, environmental, public health or other co-benefits that would arise from a SALC project.





# APPLYING FOR A SALC GRANT

Sample Timeline



## FALL

- » **Partnership development.**  
Identify the lead applicant and core team partners who will drive the project.
- » **Concept development.**  
Through a collaborative process, understand the community interests that will be addressed in the development of a concept and in the grant application.
- » **Identify which stakeholders** will participate in the proposal and project and how these stakeholders participate.

## WINTER

### **Draft SALC Guidelines Released and Adopted**

- » **Consider drafting a pre-proposal** to articulate the concept and determine the roles of various partners and stakeholders.
- » **Assess the application requirements** and develop a timeline for completion.

## SPRING

- » **Pre-proposal** summaries due

## SUMMER

- » **Complete final SALC full application**

## FALL

### **Department of Conservation announces the amount of funding available from Cap-and-Trade Auction proceeds**

- » **Full Applications due**
- » **SALC Grant Application Checklist**
  - *Grant Application Cover Sheet*
  - *Executive Summary (1-page maximum)*
  - *Application Questions Responses*
  - *Work Plan*

## WINTER

### **The Strategic Growth Council announces SALC awards.**





# DEVELOPING THE VISION + PLAN

## A Framework for Co-creating a Regional Vision + Plan

**Initial intake.** During the grant application process, the initial stages of outreach allowed stakeholders to identify community strengths, assets, key challenges and priorities for agriculture in the region and to start the process of formulating a vision for its future.

**Establish a general baseline for community goals and a common agenda.** The next stage of engagement is working collaboratively with partners to consider different options for reaching the set goals and aligning policy priorities and investments to attain the vision.

**Develop focus areas with an integrated systems perspective.** With the community goals in mind, determine the focus areas for the vision and plan (e.g. land use policy, economic development, climate mitigation and adaptation, water sustainability, easements, branding and education, etc). For each of the focus areas, you will develop a set of objectives, strategies, recommended near-term action steps and responsibilities. This organizational framework is based on the idea that innovation is most likely to occur in the areas where the focus areas overlap and that the success of the Plan will rely on collaboration among businesses, nonprofits, government agencies, educational institutions, and others working together to mutually reinforce action.

**LEAD + CORE TEAM**

AGENCY + AG COMMISSIONER + CONSULTANT



**Technical Panels**

Farmers and Food Sector  
Municipal  
Water agencies

**Common Agenda**

Articulate a shared vision and actions that strengthen the regional agricultural economy and set a horizon for implementation

**Collaboration**

Build on a range of opportunities for increased communication and collaboration across a diversity of stakeholders and decision makers

**Mutually Reinforcing Activities**

Support and build on existing agricultural and food system projects, programs and organizations and advance new ideas in a coordinated and direct fashion

**Advisors**

Economic Development  
Agricultural Easement Implementation  
Land Use Planning and Policy  
Soil Health





# DEVELOPING THE VISION + PLAN

**Mapping the Region's Agriculture - Resources, Risks,  
and Multiple Benefits**

**Assessing the current state of agricultural lands in the context of land use, water, climate change impacts, community character, economics, and other values provides a pathway to identifying implementable strategies.** Providing comprehensive mapping and associated data can be used to facilitate answers to questions that enable decision-makers, planners, and the community to easily understand the multiple benefits that the region's agriculture supports and why it's important to prioritize protecting certain agricultural lands.

## Example of questions the mapping might answer:

- » Where are the region's most productive, versatile, and resilient agricultural lands that will ensure agricultural abundance and food security for the future?
- » What have been the root causes of conversion and underutilization of agricultural resources in the region?
- » What areas are at higher risk of conversion to non-agricultural uses?
- » Where are the remaining agricultural resources and how are those resources being used?
- » What areas should be prioritized for infill development?
- » How would conversion of these agricultural resources increase the County's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions?
- » How will the region's Groundwater Sustainability Plan affect water costs and crop types in the future?
- » Where are the agriculture lands that have the greatest potential for groundwater recharge?
- » Where are the best lands for implementing carbon farming techniques to sequester carbon in the soil?
- » What areas and crops are likely to be most affected by climate change impacts?
- » Where are the vulnerable communities associated with at-risk agricultural lands and what are the risks posed to these communities by land development and climate change impacts?





# DEVELOPING THE VISION + PLAN

Mapping the Region's Agriculture - Resources, Risks,  
and Multiple Benefits

## **Resources for mapping**

The following are examples of some applications and data resources that may be helpful. Be sure to identify any additional spatial analysis projects in your region that provide data on agricultural resources.

### **California Department of Conservation's Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP)**

- » Statewide program produces maps and statistical data used for analyzing impacts on California's agricultural resources. Agricultural land is rated according to soil quality and irrigation status.

### **California Department of Conservation's Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA)**

- » Evaluates measures of soil resource quality, a given project's size, water resource availability, surrounding agricultural lands, and surrounding protected resource lands.

### **California Department of Conservation's TerraCount**

- » A scenario planning tool that models the GHG and natural resource implications of different development patterns and management activities

### **Urban Footprint**

- » Compares urban development scenarios and many impacts resulting from development.

### **Cal-Adapt**

- » Offers a view of how climate change might affect California at the local level.

### **CalEnviroScreen 3.0**

- » Identifies California communities by census tract that are disproportionately burdened by, and vulnerable to, multiple sources of pollution.





# DEVELOPING THE VISION + PLAN

## Types of Implementable Strategies

### **Crosswalk: Think Broadly and Regionally!**

An integrated systems perspective ensures consistency and a greater likelihood of buy-in and implementation. Consider how to crosswalk your regional agricultural vision and strategies with other local and regional plans and strategies, such as general plans, the regional sustainable communities strategy, climate action plans, regional water plans, LAFCo annexation policies, and habitat conservation plans. In addition, consider how your strategies can inform and build consistency under various state-funded initiatives in your region, such as the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC) program, Transformative Climate Communities, and the Health in All Policies program.



## Land Use Strategies

- » Promote Smart Growth Management
- » Zone for agriculture
- » Utilize Agricultural “Districts” or “Enterprise Zones”
- » Manage the subdivision of agriculture
- » Create sound annexation policies
- » Ensure “Right-fit” mitigation policies
- » Resolve Ag-Urban conflicts

## Agricultural Economic Development Strategies

- » Develop a Farmbudsman
- » Offer a Conservation Easement Program as Enterprise Reinvestment
- » Balance regulatory burdens for landowners
- » Provide farm friendly permit processing
- » Encourage new farmers
- » Establish Right-to-Farm policies
- » Develop a regional food hub

## Multi-benefit Community Strategies

- » Promote development efficiencies to reduce GHGs
- » Develop a Carbon Sequestration and Regenerative Farming Incentive Program
- » Launch a Groundwater Recharge Incentives Program
- » Build Farm Worker Housing
- » Empower community stewardship
- » Protect rural landscapes and quality of life
- » Reinforce the interdependence of working lands and population centers in a sustainable community

## Branding, Educational and Awareness Strategies

- » Launch a regional agriculture campaign
- » Engage and educate the public and consumers
- » Encourage Urban-Rural connections





# RESOURCES

**CALIFORNIA CLIMATE INVESTMENTS**

[www.caclimateinvestments.ca.gov](http://www.caclimateinvestments.ca.gov)

**STRATEGIC GROWTH COUNCIL**

[www.sgc.ca.gov/programs/salc](http://www.sgc.ca.gov/programs/salc)

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION DIVISION OF LAND RESOURCE PROTECTION**

[www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp](http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp)

**SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE LANDS CONSERVATION PROGRAM**

[www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/grant-programs/SALCP](http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/grant-programs/SALCP)

**FARMLAND PROTECTION ACTION GUIDE: 24 STRATEGIES FOR CALIFORNIA, INSTITUTE FOR LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENT**

[www.ca-ilg.org/document/farmland-protection-action-guide-24-strategies-california](http://www.ca-ilg.org/document/farmland-protection-action-guide-24-strategies-california)

**SANTA CLARA VALLEY AGRICULTURAL PLAN**

[www.sccgov.org/sites/dpd/DocsForms/Documents/SCV\\_ActionPlan.pdf](http://www.sccgov.org/sites/dpd/DocsForms/Documents/SCV_ActionPlan.pdf)

**CALIFORNIA CLIMATE & AGRICULTURE NETWORK**

<http://calclimateag.org/>

**AMERICAN FARMLAND TRUST – CALIFORNIA REGIONAL OFFICE**

<https://farmland.org/about/how-we-work/california-regional-office/>





California  
**Department of  
Conservation**



**CALIFORNIA STRATEGIC  
GROWTH COUNCIL**