

Workshop Item #2

Groundwater Research, Science, and Data Collection Grants

Fiscal Year 2026 Guidelines

This document is intended to provide information and instructions related to the Texas Water Development Board's (TWDB) Request for Applications for Groundwater Research, Science, and Data Collection Grants.

Contents

About Groundwater Research, Science, and Data Collection Grants	2
When to apply.....	2
Contact for additional information.....	2
Eligibility requirements.....	3
Applicant eligibility	3
Eligible applications	3
Ineligible applications	3
Grant categories	4
Category 1: Groundwater Research and Science.....	4
Category 2: Groundwater Data Collection Projects.....	5
Grant amount.....	6
Funding and partial funding provisions	6
Limitations on grant funding	6
Important dates.....	8
Application instructions.....	9
Application selection process	9
Scoring criteria.....	9
Negotiations with Selected Applicants.....	10
Appendix A – Application Checklist	11
Appendix B – Example project budget and equipment cost list tables	13
PROJECT BUDGET	13
EQUIPMENT COST LIST.....	13

About Groundwater Research, Science, and Data Collection Grants

Pursuant to Section 17.25 of Senate Bill 1, enacted by the 89th Texas Legislature during its Regular Session, the Legislature appropriated funding and resources to the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) for fiscal years 2026 and 2027 (\$3.75 million each fiscal year for a total of \$7.5 million for the biennium). The funds must be used to provide grants to groundwater conservation districts to conduct projects and programs for groundwater research, science, and data collection that benefit local groundwater management and planning and may be used to provide resources necessary for TWDB to administer the program.

The TWDB intends to award up to \$3.53 million¹ in grants during Fiscal Year 2026 to support eligible groundwater-related research and data initiatives that enhance the best available science used by groundwater conservation districts for effective groundwater management and planning.

The TWDB will be accepting applications for eligible projects from January 16, 2026 through March 13, 2026, 2:00pm. The TWDB will assess the need for any future application rounds after assessing the volume of applications in this initial round.

All applicants are required to read the guidelines and application instructions for details of eligibility and requirements prior to beginning the application process.

Applicants are responsible for the quality, completeness, and timely submission of a project proposal. Application steps and deadlines are included in this document and online on the [TWDB Stakeholder Opportunities webpage](#). Incomplete applications will not be considered.

When to apply

Applications must be submitted via email to GCDGrants@twdb.texas.gov by **2:00pm on March 13, 2026**. Hard copies of applications will not be accepted.

Contact for additional information

Questions or requests for information may be directed to GCDGrants@twdb.texas.gov or by calling 512-936-0870.

¹ A portion of the funds is reserved to full-time equivalent staff salaries.

Eligibility requirements

Applicant eligibility

- Grants may only be awarded to groundwater conservation districts that are defined by [Texas Water Code § 36.001\(1\)](#) and are authorized to accept grants under [Texas Water Code § 36.158](#).
- Applicants may only be groundwater conservation districts.
- Applicants may only submit one application. Multiple applications from the same applicant will not be accepted and will render the applicant ineligible.
- The applicant must be willing and able to enter into a grant agreement with the TWDB and meet the agreement requirements.
- Applicants may partner with other groundwater conservation districts on the proposed project, but grants will only be awarded and disbursed to the applicant.

Eligible applications

- Applications must be for projects and programs that fall into one of the two Groundwater Grant Categories (Category 1: Groundwater Research and Science or Category 2: Groundwater Data Collection).
- Applications must clearly demonstrate how the proposed activities will support the goals of the applicable grant category. The project description, scope of work, and deliverables should clearly demonstrate how the proposed activities will support the program's goals. The *Scoring criteria* section outline how applications will be scored.
- There are no local match requirements, but applicants can indicate intent of a local match in the application.
- Applications for Fiscal Year 2026 grants must be for projects that can be completed by May 31, 2028.

Ineligible applications

- Applications *will not* be accepted from any entities that are not groundwater conservation districts as defined by [Texas Water Code § 36.001\(1\)](#) and authorized to accept grants under [Texas Water Code § 36.158](#).
- Multiple applications from the same applicant *will not* be accepted.
- Hard copy applications *will not* be accepted.
- Incomplete applications *will not* be accepted.

Grant categories

Awards will be granted for groundwater research, science, and data collection projects and programs that benefit local groundwater management and planning and the statewide groundwater science, data, and modeling objectives of the TWDB. Applications must be for projects that fall into one of the following two categories. The TWDB acknowledges that projects may overlap into the two categories. Applicants should choose a category for which the primary goal of the project and category are most closely aligned.

Category 1: Groundwater Research and Science

The primary goal of Category 1 is to further best available science² in the state and support the implementation of effective groundwater resource management and planning. Category 1 projects can be distinguished from Category 2 projects if the project does not primarily include new data collection efforts.

To receive consideration, Category 1 project proposals must meet the eligibility criteria and be aligned with the following (non-exhaustive list, in no particular order, provided as examples):

Hydrogeology & Aquifer Studies

- Aquifer hydrogeology
- Aquifer delineation and characterization
- Test hole drilling
- Multi-well aquifer testing
- Aquifer flow investigations, including tracer tests and isotope analysis
- Aquifer monitoring
- Groundwater production studies
- Groundwater production estimates
- Groundwater quality assessment
- Temporal changes in groundwater quality and quantity
- Groundwater availability
- Local numerical groundwater flow model development (must be compatible with an existing MODFLOW 6 groundwater availability model)
- Geophysical surveys

Recharge & Discharge Studies

- Recharge enhancement and delineation
- Recharge zone protection strategies
- Recharge quantification
- Discharge feature identification and mapping
- Groundwater-surface water interactions
- Conjunctive surface water management
- Spring system research

² *Best available science* is defined in [Texas Water Code § 36.0015](#) as conclusions that are logically and reasonably derived using statistical or quantitative data, techniques, analyses, and studies that are publicly available to reviewing scientists and can be employed to address a specific scientific question. In other words, it is the most trustworthy and up-to-date scientific information that's available to everyone and making conclusions based on solid data and logical methods that other scientists can check and understand.

Conservation & Efficiency Studies

- Efficient use of groundwater
- Waste prevention and groundwater preservation
- Conservation and protection of groundwater

Groundwater Resource Impact Studies

- Subsidence
- Drought impacts on groundwater
- Unreasonable impact studies
- Natural resource and environmental impacts from groundwater production
- Water quality impact studies
- Socioeconomic impacts related to groundwater management and planning

Category 2: Groundwater Data Collection

The primary goal of Category 2 is to enhance the collection, quality, and availability of groundwater data used by groundwater conservation districts and the TWDB to improve the understanding of local groundwater conditions and support effective groundwater resource management and planning within a district and across the state. Category 2 includes equipment purchases.

To receive consideration, Category 2 project proposals must meet the eligibility criteria and be aligned with the following (non-exhaustive list, in no particular order, provided as examples):

- Basic data collection for groundwater systems
- Groundwater use data
- Groundwater quality data collection, including sampling and analysis
- Water level monitoring
- Database creation or enhancement
- Data dissemination projects
- Synoptic water level surveys
- New monitoring well installation
- Multiport well installation
- Assessment and quality control of current well information
- Data extraction from records and documents

Grant amount

The TWDB has up to \$3,530,000 available for Fiscal Year 2026 Grants. **The TWDB will not award grants for less than \$50,000 or greater than \$300,000.** Exceptions to this range will not be made. Eligible costs are directly attributed to the project, including planning, design, purchase, acquisition, installation, construction, monitoring, reporting, administration, and management. Funding limitations are outlined in the *Limitations on grant funding* section of this document.

The TWDB awards these funds through a statewide competitive grants process and evaluates all proposals based upon the specific criteria set forth in these guidelines.

Funding and partial funding provisions

The TWDB and local governments must adhere to [Texas Grant Management Standards](#) to promote the efficient use of public funds. The TWDB reserves the right to reject all proposals and make no awards under this announcement. In addition, the TWDB reserves the right to partially fund proposals by funding discrete activities, portions, or phases of a proposed project.

If the TWDB decides to partially fund a proposal, it will do so in a manner that does not prejudice any applicants or affect the basis upon which the proposal, or portion thereof, was evaluated or selected for award, and that maintains the integrity of the competition and the evaluation/selection process. The TWDB reserves the right to reject parts of any or all applications if staff determines that the application(s) does not adequately meet the required criteria or if the funding available is less than the requested funding.

Awards will be disbursed either as reimbursements or partial advances with quarterly invoicing requirements. Additional disbursement details will be outlined in the grant agreement.

Limitations on grant funding

Ineligible projects and activities:

Funding *cannot* be used to pay for:

- Projects and programs that are not groundwater related
- Activities that do not benefit local groundwater management and planning
- Education and outreach programming and resources

Any costs for projects and activities that are not explicitly stated here, such as overhead costs, are acceptable.

Based on laws enacted by the 87th Texas Legislature, certain successful applicants will be asked to certify the following in the grant agreement:

Required for grants to political subdivisions:

Enforcement of Certain Federal Laws Regulating Firearms, Firearm Accessories, and Firearm Ammunition. The grant recipient must certify that it is not prohibited from receiving state funds under Texas Penal Code § 1.10(d) (related to federal laws regulating firearms, firearm accessories, and firearm ammunition). The grant recipient must also certify that, during the term of the contract, it will immediately notify the TWDB, in writing, of any suit against it by the Attorney General of Texas under Texas Penal Code § 1.10(f).

Required for grants to cities or counties:

Enforcement of Public Camping Bans. The grant recipient must certify that it is not prohibited from receiving state grant funds under Texas Local Government Code § 364.004 (related to public camping bans). The grant recipient must also agree that, during the term of the contract, it will immediately notify the TWDB, in writing, of any suit against it by the Attorney General of Texas under Texas Local Government Code § 363.003.

Required for grants to state agencies, including university systems or systems of higher education, cities, counties and special districts and authorities: Firearm Suppressor Regulation. The grant recipient must certify that it is not prohibited from receiving state grant funds under Texas Government Code § 2.103 (related to the regulation of firearm suppressors). The grant recipient must also agree that, during the term of the contract, it will immediately notify the TWDB, in writing, of any suit against it by the Attorney General of Texas under Texas Government Code § 2.104.

Important dates

Accepting applications from January 16, 2026 through March 13, 2026, 2:00pm.

January 16, 2026	Request for Applications posted on TWDB website and solicitation emailed to groundwater conservation districts.
March 13, 2026 2:00pm	Deadline to submit application via email to GCDGrants@twdb.texas.gov .
May 2026	Tentative TWDB Board approval of selected projects at May Board meeting.
July 2026	Anticipated deadline for executing grant agreements.
May 31, 2028	Deadline to complete awarded projects.

Application instructions

Applications must be submitted via email to GCDGrants@twdb.texas.gov by 2:00pm on March 13, 2026, with the subject line "FY2026 Groundwater Grant Application – <Your District Name>". The email should include a completed application form with additional attachments as outlined in Appendix A and in the application form.

Before beginning the submittal process, carefully read the entirety of this guidelines document. Applications must be complete when submitted to the TWDB. A checklist of required items is included as Appendix A. Incomplete applications will not be accepted. Only one application per applicant will be accepted.

Questions, requests for information, or requests for accessibility accommodations may be directed to GCDGrants@twdb.texas.gov or by calling 512-936-0870.

Application selection process

Prior to technical review, each application will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of these guidelines. Incomplete applications and those that do not meet the eligibility requirements will not be accepted.

Applications that pass the eligibility and completeness screening will be scored on a 100-point scale by a technical review panel using the criteria and weights listed below in the *Scoring criteria* section.

Scoring criteria

The technical review panel will score based on the criteria below. Reviewers will allocate up to 100 points per applicant.

A. Project Benefits for Groundwater Management (20 points)

Does the project support local groundwater management and planning?

0-10 points; more points for clearly articulated local benefits to address needs

Does the project address statewide needs and improve the best available science?

0-10 points; more points for clearly articulated statewide benefits and improvements to best available science.

B. Applicant Capacity and Commitment (15 points)

Does the applicant provide adequate documentation that they can receive and manage grant funds?

0-10 points; more points for demonstrated ability to receive and manage grant funds

Is there a clear commitment from the applicant to complete the project?

0-5 points; more points for clear dedication to complete project

C. Technical Approach and Feasibility (30 points)

Does the scope of work clearly identify tasks, deliverables, and timelines?

0-10 points; more points for detailed scope of work

Is the stated approach sound and practical for achieving the stated goals?

0-10 points; more points for clear approach that can achieve goals

Does the project team have the technical expertise needed to carry out the project? *0-10 points; more points for clear demonstration of strong technical expertise*

D. Financial Plan and Cost Justification (20 points)

Is there a demonstrated financial need?

0-10 points; more points for greater need

Are cost estimates reasonable and adequately justified?

0-5 points; more points for clear, detailed, and well-supported cost estimates

Are supplemental funding sources included?

0-5 points; more points for clearly identified supplemental funding with documentation

E. Overall Impact and Value (15 points)

Will the project produce meaningful outcomes to further best available science for groundwater management and planning in Texas?

0-15 points; more points for significant, clearly defined, and impactful outcomes that advance groundwater science and inform groundwater management and planning, with strong alignment with regional or statewide priorities.

Negotiations with selected applicants

The applicable scope of work, deliverables, timelines, budgets, and contract terms will be negotiated after the TWDB awards the selected applicants. Failure to arrive at mutually agreeable terms of a contract with the selected applicant will constitute a rejection of the Board's offer and may result in subsequent negotiations with other applicants.

Appendix A – Application Checklist

Before beginning the submittal process, carefully read the entirety of this guidelines document. Applications must be complete when submitted to the TWDB.

The Applicant Information and Project Information sections of this checklist include items that need to be completed on the application form. The *Supporting Documentation* section indicates additional documents that need to be provided to support the information provided on the application form.

I. Applicant Information

- Official name and address of the applicant
 - Groundwater conservation district name
 - Physical address
 - Mailing address
- Authorized official (such as general manager or board member) to perform the acts of the groundwater conservation district (i.e., who has legal authority to sign a grant agreement, if awarded?)
 - Name
 - Title
 - Phone number
 - Email address
- Designated representative of the groundwater conservation district (i.e., who do we contact regarding this application?)
 - Name
 - Title
 - Phone number
 - Email address

II. Eligibility Confirmation

- Applicant is a groundwater conservation district as defined by Texas Water Code § 36.001(1).
- Applicant is authorized to accept grants under Texas Water Code § 36.158.
- Eligibility documentation
Attach ONE of the following to confirm applicant eligibility, intent, and authorized representatives. Indicate which form of documentation is included in the application:
 - An affidavit from the individual with the authority to act on behalf of the applicant, OR
 - A copy of the adopted resolution, OR
 - Minutes approved by the groundwater conservation district board with the authority to act on behalf of the applicant

Eligibility documentation must include:

- Amount requested;
- Any local match (not required);
- A statement that grant funds will supplement, not replace, applicant funds;
- Authorization to submit application; AND
- Designation of a representative the TWDB can contact regarding the application.

III. Applicant Financial Information

- Annual operating budget (amount)
 - Provide most recent annual operating budget for the applicant (link for online access or attach document)
- Last financial audit (date)
 - Provide copy of last financial audit (link for online access or attach document)
- Explanation of the need for financial assistance in the context of the applicant's financial situation

IV. Project Information

- Total project cost
- Amount requested from the TWDB
- Supplemental funding amount and source(s), if applicable (*local match not required*)
- Indicate grant category (Category 1: Groundwater Research and Science OR Category 2: Groundwater Data Collection)
- Project title
- Short project description (brief statement of purpose)
- Project duration (months to complete; awarded projects must be completed by January 29, 2028)
- Category-specific narrative:
 - Category 1: Groundwater Research and Science
 - Describe how this project furthers best available science³ in the state and supports the implementation of effective groundwater resource management and planning.
 - Category 2: Groundwater Data Collection
 - Describe how this project enhances the collection, quality, and availability of groundwater data used by groundwater conservation districts and the TWDB to support effective groundwater resource management and planning across within the district and state.
- Scope of work (attach document) that includes:
 - Clearly identified tasks,
 - Clearly defined project team,
 - Estimated completion times for each task (project timeline),
 - Proposed equipment purchases (if applicable), and
 - Deliverables the TWDB will receive through this project (data, reports, or other products).

Note: All deliverables must be provided to the TWDB and must adhere to data requirements as provided in the grant agreement.
- Project budget (attach document using example tables in Appendix B) that includes:
 - Total project cost
 - Cost of each significant element of the project
 - Costs that will be covered by the TWDB and local match (if applicable; *local match is not required*), and
 - Equipment cost list (if applicable).

V. Additional Documentation

- Any additional information or documentation to support your application.

³ See definition of *best available science* on page 4.

Appendix B – Example project budget and equipment cost list tables

PROJECT BUDGET

Item/Task	Description	District funds	TWDB funds	Total cost
1	Purchase equipment (transducers, water quality sampling materials)	\$0.00	\$30,000.00	\$30,000.00
2	Establish springflow gaging stations	\$0.00	\$140,000.00	\$140,000.00
3	Collect water quality samples	\$0.00	\$30,000.00	\$30,000.00
4	Conduct recharge analysis	\$25,000.00	\$35,000.00	\$60,000.00
	Total	\$25,000.00	\$235,000.00	\$260,000.00

EQUIPMENT COST LIST

Description	Cost per unit	Number of units	District funds	TWDB funds	Total cost
Orion Star A329 pH/ISE/Conductivity/RDO/DO Portable Meter Kit	\$3,700.00	1	\$0.00	\$3,700.00	\$3,700.00
Silicon tubing in various sizes, 25-ft rolls	\$175.00	2	\$0.00	\$350.00	\$350.00
SonTek FlowTracker2 equipment	\$12,400.00	1	\$0.00	\$12,400.00	\$12,400.00
Stainless-Steel Pressure Transducers	\$2,550.00	3	\$0.00	\$7,650.00	\$7,650.00
pH electrodes, pH buffer and acid solutions, water meter kits	\$4,000.00	Misc.	\$0.00	\$4,000.00	\$4,000.00
Shipping costs	\$1,900.00	Misc.	\$0.00	\$1,900.00	\$1,900.00
Total			\$0.00	\$30,000.00	\$30,000.00