

December 15, 2022

**Subject:** Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program Round 5, 6, and 7 One Year Grant Extension Waiver

**Reporting Period:** December 2022

**Staff Lead:** Shanna Atherton-Bauer, SALC Program Manager, DOC

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## Recommended Action

Amend the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program’s Round 5, 6, and 7 Guidelines’ grant agreement extension language, which currently states, “The duration of a grant agreement may be extended by up to an additional year” to read “With written justification from the applicant and at the discretion of the Strategic Growth Council’s Executive Director, the duration of a grant agreement may be extended. The Executive Director will report any extensions granted to the Council” consistent with the current SALC Guidelines.

## Summary

Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation (SALC) program staff request Council approval to remove the Round 5, 6, and 7 Guidelines (Guidelines) grant extension limitation for consistency with the current Guidelines. Included in this report is an overview of the SALC program, background of the extension process and SALC recommendation for Council approval.

## Background

### About the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program

SALC provides grants to fund agricultural conservation easements, capacity and project development grants, and local government plans to protect agricultural lands from conversion to more greenhouse-gas-intensive uses.

### Extension Request History

The Round 5, 6, and 7 SALC Guidelines include a one-year limitation on acquisition grant extensions. Earlier rounds of SALC were silent on whether acquisition grants could be extended but included a one-year extension clause for planning grants. The planning grant extension was broadened to include acquisition grants to increase transparency around program processes. However, changes locally, nationally, and globally have changed the project landscape and resulted in unforeseen delays to many projects funded under these Guidelines.

Round 5 grants were awarded funding in December 2019, with Round 6 and 7 awards made annually thereafter. Several projects awarded during those rounds, including at least five Round 5 projects, have

dealt with delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic such that those projects require extensions beyond one year to successfully close. Other projects have been impacted by longer processing times by match funders, particularly projects co-funded by federal programs with more extensive review requirements. Without an amendment to the Guidelines, these projects will be unable to close, resulting in lost conservation opportunities or further delays in project closings as these projects wait to reapply for funding in future rounds.

The current SALC Guidelines do not limit the duration of extensions to the original grant term. Rather, the Round 8 Guidelines state, “With written justification from the applicant and at the discretion of the Strategic Growth Council’s Executive Director, the duration of a grant agreement may be extended. The Executive Director will report any extensions granted to the Council.”

This language allows flexibility on a case-by-case basis for grantees who may need more time to complete a project than the standard grant term and current extension limitations allow.

## Recommendation

SALC program staff recommend Council approval of an amendment to the Round 5, 6, and 7 SALC Guidelines’ grant agreement extension language for consistency with the current Guidelines.

## Next Steps

Staff will notify stakeholders of the amendment via eblast following approval. Staff will communicate requests for extensions to the Executive Director in a timely fashion and will work with relevant grantees to extend their agreements consistent with the revised Guidelines.

## Council Recommendation

Amend the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program’s Round 5, 6, and 7 Guidelines’ grant agreement extension language, which currently states, “The duration of a grant agreement may be extended by up to an additional year” to read “With written justification from the applicant and at the discretion of the Strategic Growth Council’s Executive Director, the duration of a grant agreement may be extended. The Executive Director will report any extensions granted to the Council” consistent with the current SALC Guidelines.

## Attachments

None