



## Farm Water Management Planning *Okanagan Adaptation Strategies Implementation*

### Request for Expressions of Interest

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#### ***Timeline***

February 20, 2017 to January 31, 2018

#### ***Project background***

This project is identified as a priority action in the *Okanagan Adaptation Strategies* (Strategies 1.3, Actions 1.3a and 1.3b). This plan (completed in the spring of 2016) identifies the potential impacts of climate change, and suitable strategies and actions for adaptation, for the Okanagan agriculture sector. Implementation of priority actions is being led by through the Okanagan Agricultural Adaptation Working Group with seed funding provided by Growing Forward 2.

#### ***Project objectives***

- To provide individualized water management planning support to agricultural producers in the Okanagan
- To assess the level of interest in water management planning – and specific water management needs – amongst Okanagan producers
- To adapt and further refine the Farm Water Planning Toolkit (originally developed in the Cowichan region) for the Okanagan context\*

\*NOTE: This objective/task will *not* be the responsibility of the contractor. The contractor will be responsible for providing input (but not for making changes to the toolkit).

#### ***Project description***

As Okanagan summers become warmer and drier and as precipitation patterns change – including more winter precipitation falling as rain (rather than snow) – producers will be required to adapt their water management practices to suit the changing conditions. In recent Okanagan workshops, producers prioritized the need to enhance the available water management tools/information, with a particular emphasis on the need for individualized support (the concept of a “water field agent” was popular).

An Integrated Farm Water Planning Toolkit has been developed in the Cowichan region where producers have a range of water-management related challenges (e.g. supply, storage, irrigation and drainage). The toolkit is intended to be applicable to many farm types and to address the full range of water management issues (including considerations of climate change). Providing access to this planning tool, along with water management expertise, would offer the direct and individualized support that Okanagan producers identified as needed. However, the toolkit will need to be adapted for the Okanagan context and then tested with the range of production types in the Okanagan.

Developing an integrated approach to farm-level planning that assesses all aspects of farm water, while increasing producer awareness of the potential impacts of climate change to water-related issues, will enhance the overall resilience of the Okanagan agricultural sector.

Phase one of the Farm Water Management Planning project will involve training the successful applicant (i.e. contractor) to deliver the toolkit. During this phase of the project the toolkit will also be refined, as needed, for the Okanagan context. Toolkit refinement will also be done (periodically) throughout the project to ensure continuous improvement. Adjustments to the toolkit will not be the contractor's responsibility.

To make the project relevant to wine grape growers, Sustainable Winegrowing British Columbia (SWBC) will be considered when refining and delivering the toolkit. SWBC provides self-assessment checklists and supporting reference materials and outreach support that focus on soil and water management, among other topics. While the toolkit and the SWBC self-assessment have some overlap in content, they could be quite complementary. The toolkit includes more detailed questions about the current situation and encourages growers to look at future scenarios. The SWBC self-assessment questions could be cross-checked and matched up with the Toolkit questions so the contractor can help the grower complete that process at the same time.

Supported by the Climate Action Initiative, broader promotion of the toolkit will be provided by local project partners and agricultural organizations through existing distribution and communication channels. The contractor delivering the toolkit will sign up interested producers to the pilot project, as well as promoting the planning process by sharing information at local industry meetings/events.

Starting as early as possible in 2017, the applied pilot would offer the water management planning process to interested producers in the Okanagan (number dependent on interest and budget cap) on a first-come-first serve basis. There would be no cost to the producers and pilot project would support improvements to the toolkit and better information regarding water management issues and needs – across production systems – in the Okanagan.

## ***Activities***

*Participate in training and provide input for preliminary tool refinement [Feb/Mar 2017]*

- Participation in an initial full day training and input session about the Farm Water Management Toolkit including:
  - Thorough review of existing toolkit modules
  - Participation in 1-3 “sample farm” plan walk-throughs to increase familiarity with the toolkit and planning process (and test with Okanagan production systems)
  - Provision of feedback regarding toolkit to enable any refinements



# Climate Action Initiative

BC AGRICULTURE & FOOD

*Provide “direct” promotion of the water management planning process\**

*[March 2017 – Autumn 2017]*

- Collaborate with partner organizations (sector groups, local governments, Climate Action Initiative (CAI), Ministry of Agriculture) to develop promotion plan
- Provide direct promotion of the toolkit by attending sector organization meetings and events to share information about the planning process
- Sign up interested producers for pilot project

\*NOTE: Toolkit promotion will be led by CAI and supported by partner organizations through their existing mechanisms. The contractor will only be responsible for direct promotion (as described above).

*Deliver Farm Water Management planning process [March 2017 to December 2017]*

(a) Coordinate and undertake farm visits

- Register interested producers for Farm Water Management planning process
- Coordinate logistics and scheduling for farm visits
- Provide introductory phone-calls to review planning process and requirements
- Undertake 15-25 individual farm visits to assess water management issues using the Water Management Toolkit
- Provide feedback regarding additional toolkit refinements throughout the planning process

(b) Develop and communicate Farm Water Management Plans *[March 2017 to December 2017]*

- Using the toolkit and farm plan template, develop individualized Farm Water Management plans
- Share plans back with participants via farm visit or phone-calls

*Summary Report [January 2018]*

- Provide overall findings and lessons learned through the pilot project in a summary report including the following elements:
  - Apparent level of interest (potential future uptake) for planning toolkit
  - Water management priorities for Okanagan producers, assessment of whether toolkit answers key questions and/or supports decisions
  - Outstanding issues or opportunities for improving the toolkit/planning process
  - Opportunities for cost-share supports to enhance implementation of farm plan recommendations

## ***Deliverables***

- Participation in training session and input into water management toolkit adaptation (for the Okanagan)

- Completed water management visits and plans for 15-25 producers in the Okanagan
- Summary report including effectiveness evaluation for the planning process/toolkit

***Summary of preferred background, expertise & experience***

- Strong applied knowledge of agricultural water management technologies and practices in the Okanagan context
- Experience providing information and educational materials to agricultural producers
- Training or formal education in agricultural water management with preference for certified irrigation professionals
- Knowledge of impacts of climate change on agricultural practices and water management
- Ability to summarize technical information in clear language
- Ability to work both collaboratively (with project team) and independently
- Ability to manage and coordinate logistics

***Contract Amount***

\$65,000 (inclusive of all applicable taxes and contractor expenses)

***Key project partners***

- Okanagan Adaptation Strategies working group
- BC Fruit Growers Association
- Okanagan Basin Water Board
- BC Agriculture & Food Climate Action Initiative
- BC Ministry of Agriculture
- Okanagan-based agricultural organizations

***Instructions for application***

Please provide your cover letter, resume and 2 professional references. This should be submitted as one complete electronic application, in PDF format to:

[Okanagan@bcagclimateaction.ca](mailto:Okanagan@bcagclimateaction.ca)

Enquiries regarding this posting should also be directed to the above email address. Applications must be received no later than Friday February 3<sup>rd</sup> 2017, 4pm Pacific Standard Time.