

# Grazing Lease Proposals Best Practices Handbook



*Compiled from Real Answers in Successful  
Grazing Lease Proposals\**

Prepared by the Alameda County RCD and the UC Cooperative Extension for  
the Grazing Lease Proposal Workshop

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# General Best Practices

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## Brevity

- Grazing Lease Proposals should be succinct without sacrificing details and examples where relevant
  - Utilize appendices, photographs, charts and bulleted lists to this end
  - Refrain from including personal anecdotes or stories unless directly applicable to a section of your proposal or question in the RFP

## Formatting

- Clarity
  - Clearly delineate each section of your Grazing Lease Proposal
    - Tabs or section dividers, numbering, bullets, or bolded / underlined titles can be used for this purpose
  - Each section of your Grazing Lease Proposal should reflect a question or section of the Grazing Lease RFP
    - Reviewer's often assign point values by question / section, so make it clear you've answered each individual piece of the RFP
- Style
  - Consistency of formatting style across document
  - Font, font size, bulleting, indentation, and titles should be the same throughout the document



# General Best Practices (continued)

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- Design
  - Design features should be consistent throughout the document, and not distract from content
  - Ex: Simple logo and/or contact info in the header or footer



## Physical Delivery Method

- For a professional looking finished product, proposals can be placed in three ring binders, report covers, or can be spiral bound



# Content Best Practices

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## Overall Content Best Practices

- Applicable and *Specific* Examples
  - Specific examples are crucial to describing what makes you uniquely qualified as an applicant
    - Grazing Lease Proposals should be written as if the reviewer knows nothing about you or your operation
  - Examples are appropriate for nearly every question or section in a Grazing Lease RFP
    - Whether describing natural resource management, infrastructure improvements, or partnerships, answers should explicitly state “who, what, where, when, why or how”
      - For vegetation management, give examples of *what* kind of vegetation you controlled, and *how* you did it
      - For infrastructure work, explain *why* you undertook the project, *how* you completed it, and *what* completing it involved
      - For special status species management, explain *what* species you were managing for, *how* you managed for it, and *who* (if anyone) you worked with to do it
      - For partnerships, explain *which* agency or individual you worked with, *why* you worked with them, *what* you did as their partner, and *what* they did as yours



# Content Best Practices (continued)

- Ex 1:

- When writing about experience with fencing, “Over 10 year of experience installing fencing” is too general. A better answer would be, “7,000 ft of barbed wire fencing installed on XYZ Agency land while acting as the grazing lessee from 2000-2010. Additionally, 3,000 ft of electric fence installed for pasture division rotation.”
- If adding specific examples makes an answer feel too long, utilize an appendix, bulleted list or table:

<u>TABLE 1: INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS COMPLETED</u>		
<i>Barbed Wire Fence</i>		
Location A	4,000 ft	Perimeter fence
Location B	3,000 ft	Holding field
Total:	7,000 ft	
<i>Electric Fence</i>		
Location A	3,000 ft	Pasture division / rotation
Total:	3,000 ft	

- Ex 2:

- When writing about special status species management, “Currently manage land on my home ranch for California red-legged frog habitat” is too general. A more specific answer would be, “With the help of the NRCS, I have de-sedimented two livestock ponds at my home ranch, and control cattle via exclusion areas in order to provide suitable habitat for California red-legged frog.”



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- Photographs

- Is a picture worth 1,000 words?

- Photos should *only* be used when they are relevant, or supplement something you have written
    - Photos should show things you have done – do *not* include photos of other operations, unless explicitly stating they are being used as an example of what you would or could do
    - Photos of your animals are not important unless it directly relates to a question in the RFP

- Understand your audience

- Who is offering this lease? What is their mission? What do they value as an agency or individual?

- Understanding the value and mission of the agency or individual offering a lease helps you tailor responses and statements in your proposal

- Ex: The mission and land management goals of a utilities district will be different from that of a parks district, which will be different than those of a wild-life refuge.

- The utilities district may call for a focus on watershed health in your proposal, vs. recreation and safety for the parks district, or conservation of special status species for the refuge



# Content Best Practices (continued)

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## Resource Management

- Special Status Species
  - If you have past or present experience working in areas with special status species, provide specific examples about this experience
    - Describe the species of concern as it relates to your operation
    - Describe specific activities undertaken to manage for the species of concern
      - Ex: Adjustments to grazing calendar, exclosures or enclosures, pond improvements (such as de-sedimentation)
    - Describe partners and agencies you worked with, and how you worked with them, to manage a special status species
  - **If you don't have any experience managing for a special status species**, research best management practices for special status species known to occur in the lease area and describe what you *would* do
    - Utilize agency staff or consultants if needed
- Vegetation Management
  - Describe vegetation management goals you have or are working towards; give examples of how you achieved them (if completed)
    - Note specific plant species for which you managed
    - Describe the strategy implemented to manage for these species & why it was selected
      - Herbicide, grazing, etc.





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- Future Management

- Identify potential resource management needs / issues on site for which you are preparing the proposal (if applicable)
  - Present recommendations for management of these needs / issues
- Describe anything you can, and are willing to do that is above and beyond the day-to-day resource management expectations
  - Ex: Specialized monitoring systems, innovative grazing designs to improve resources, etc.

## Infrastructure

- Past Improvements or Projects
  - If you have past or present experience improving infrastructure or working on infrastructure projects, provide specific examples about this experience
    - Explain why you undertook the improvement or project (if not obvious)
    - Explain what you did - use specifics such as feet of fence, feet of pipe / trench, gallons in tank, number of troughs
    - Describe the location of the infrastructure project
    - Identify the partners and agencies you have worked with on past projects / current projects
      - Describe how you worked with them to improve or install infrastructure



# Content Best Practices (continued)

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## Operational Capabilities

- Movement of Animals / Adjustments to Herd
  - It is crucial to specifically describe your ability to adapt to changing conditions on the land, both by moving your animals or adjusting your herd size
    - It is not enough to say that you are able to move animals if needed, specifics should be provided on:
      - Availability of other sites for your herd
      - Where these other sites are located
      - Infrastructure at other sites
      - Equipment you can access to move animals
  - Specifics should be provided on your ability to grow or shrink your herd as well
    - To shrink, would you cull, permanently move some animals to another location, etc?
    - To grow, how will you access animals? Do you have relationships with other operations that can provide animals? Can you easily move animals from another location?
- Response Time / Staff Availability
  - There is no standard for response time or staff availability, however, it is important to express that someone *can be on site with the immediacy that the proposed lease site requires*
    - Ex: A site in a heavily trafficked recreation area may require shorter response time than land closed to the public.



- Explain how response time will be achieved
  - Is there a home ranch near by? Does an employee live in the area? Will there be staff with the herd regularly?
- There is no standard for number of visits to a site per week, however, it is important to express an understanding of the regularity and schedule of visits a site requires
  - Visits should be regular enough to catch issues before they become emergencies, and should be scheduled based on need at the site.
  - Ex: Saying “Staff will visit the site three days a week” doesn’t explain your plan for monitoring the site. A more descriptive answer would be “Staff will visit the site every other day, and will always check the area for issues on Mondays, after weekend recreation crowds.”
- Demonstration of Assets
  - Specifically describe the assets you have that enable you to successfully conduct your operation on a day-to-day basis
    - Staff
      - *Note:* Full resumes are not required for each employee – a title, brief description of experience & number of years on the job is enough
    - Equipment
    - Land
    - Partnerships
    - Funding or rebate programs (if applicable)



# Content Best Practices (continued)

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## Partnerships

- Lease Partnerships
  - Describe, in detail, any other grazing leases you've had in the past or currently have
    - Include specifics about what makes you a valuable partner in this partnership
- Business Partnerships
  - Partnering with other outfits or individuals in applying for a lease is not necessarily a "best practice"
    - Business partners can help diversity the experience and expertise of the applicants, or show that you have support in place when needed
    - However, partnerships must be meaningful and add value to your proposal, and partners listed on the proposal should remain involved after the proposal is submitted
- Other Partnerships
  - Technical Experts / Consultants
    - Hiring or working with a consultant is not necessarily a "best practice"
      - Demonstrating that you understand when and where you need expert assistance *is*
    - However, if you are unfamiliar with some of the more technical or scientific aspects of the RFP, assistance from a consultant may help you better answer certain questions

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- Agencies
    - **Define which agencies you've worked with, provide specific examples of any projects you undertook with them, describe how you worked with them and what you accomplished together**
      - Even if you only share a property boundary with an agency, you likely still work with them from time to time – describe that relationship
  - Non-Profits
    - **Define which non-profits you've worked with, describe specifically how you engaged with them**
      - Ex: Riparian area management with Trout Unlimited; Conservation easement with the Nature Conservancy

## Letters of Recommendation

- Who should write you a letter?
  - **Agencies or Individuals from whom you've leased land**
    - Letters of recommendation are most valuable if they come from *someone who can describe what you are like as a grazing tenant*
  - **Partners or Partner Agency Staff with whom you've worked**
    - Ex: Trout Unlimited staff person with whom you worked to implement a riparian restoration project on your ranch



# Content Best Practices (continued)

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- *Note:* NRCS Staff are unable to provide letters of recommendation, but can prepare a letter confirming the work they have done with you
- **Technical experts or advisors with whom you've worked**
- Neighbors or ranchers who have directly observed your operation
  - Neighbors with whom you share a property boundary can attest to your ability to keep your herd safe and controlled, the regularity with which you conduct infrastructure improvements, etc.
- Persons from agricultural or ranching-focused groups with which you are affiliated
- *Note:* Testaments to your character should be implicit in professional letters of recommendation – additional letters from friends and neighbors are not required to this end
- **Formatting**
  - Letters of recommendation, where applicable, should be presented on official agency or company letterhead

## Affiliations

- List affiliations that display leadership and connection within the agricultural community
  - Ex: Membership in your local Cattlemen's or Cattlewomen's association, participation in the local agriculture advisory committee, etc.



# Additional Considerations

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Recognize / be aware of the relationship agreement being presented in the RFP

- Partnership, vs. Lessee as Manager, vs. Lessee as Employee
  - If you are not on the same page as the agency or individual offering the lease, it may result in frustration between parties, disagreements and arguments, or even termination of a lease

Start planning now!

- Track what you are doing now, so when the time comes to prepare a Grazing Lease Proposal you are ready
  - See “Table of Rangeland Management Activities” included in this packet





*\*All "Best Practices" and examples have been kept anonymous to protect the privacy of applicants.*