FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. **Could you share examples of projects that received grant funding?**
   To view a complete listing of all grants and partnerships awarded to date, please view the latest Safe, Clean Water Program Annual Report, Appendix C: https://www.valleywater.org/project-updates/safe-clean-water-and-natural-flood-protection-program/safe-clean-water-program-archive

2. **When does the grantee's governing board resolution need to be submitted?**
   Valley Water must receive notice that the Grantee's governing board has agreed to accept grant funding from Valley Water in the event a project is approved. The governing board resolution provided in the RFP must be included with the grant application.

   If the governing board resolution has not been completed at the time of the application deadline of December 1, 2020, a letter stating that the governing board's resolution will be provided at a later date can be submitted with the application. Please note that a signed resolution is required prior to executing the agreement to award the grant.

3. **Can an organization apply for more than one grant application?**
   Yes.

4. **What is Valley Water's fiscal year?**
   Valley Water's fiscal year starts on July 1 and runs through June 30 of the following calendar year.

5. **Is the 25% match for the total project cost or Valley Water's cost?**
   Grantee must demonstrate a 25% match of the total project's cost.

6. **Can I apply for a grant with my matching contribution coming at a date later than Valley Water's service period?**
   The grantee must demonstrate at least 25% of cost sharing as part of the minimum requirement at the time of the application submission. If approved for funding, Grantee must show documentation of the matching contribution.

7. **Is the 25% cost share match for planning or implementation?**
   The 25% match is for the total project cost and matching can be attributed into any cost category.

8. **Is there a standard rate for estimating the value of volunteer hours as part of the 25% match?**
   Valley Water recommends using the Independent Sector's estimated hourly rate for volunteer time. In 2019, the California volunteer value was estimated at $31.51 per hour, per person. Please visit the website here: https://independentsector.org/resource/vovt_details/

9. **Can grant funds be used for food and lecture in educational outreach?**
Yes, grant funds can be used for food and lecture in educational outreach and must be listed as a cost in the budget sheet.

10. **Any restrictions on labor vs. equipment?**
There are no restrictions on the amount that can be budgeted for labor vs. equipment. However, the purchase of construction equipment with grant funds is not permissible. Purchase of non-construction equipment is permissible provided the project requires buying and installing such equipment.

Example: One of the Pollution Prevention grants awarded in 2014 was to Secure Pharmaceutical Collection Bin Expansion. The project included buying and installing pharmaceutical collection bins throughout Santa Clara County to help reduce the harmful effects of pharmaceuticals entering our local waterways and to promote the safe and secure disposal of expired prescription medications. In this situation, the purchase of the collection bins was permissible.

11. **Can I submit a design/build grant request that is 20% planning and 80% implementation?**
Yes, projects may have a maximum of 20% allocated to planning and at least 80% implementation.

12. **Do you need CEQA review prior to the contract being awarded or can it be part of the project?**
A completed California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review is not required prior to grant proposal submission or award (for projects that require such a review). Applicants should provide as much detailed information as reasonable about the project activities, including details about site locations and access routes, species and habitat(s) that could be affected, ground disturbing activities, work schedule, and any environmental concerns that may exist. Proposals that indicate that the project is further along in the process of acquiring the necessary permits and reviews (i.e. CEQA), will be scored higher than those that are not as far along. Please refer to each priority RFP for the Minimum Requirements & Evaluation Criteria guidelines.

13. **What is the difference between Valley Water fee and easement?**
Fee ownership refers to when Valley Water owns the property. An Easement is "the right to use the property of another person for a specific purpose." Valley Water has many Easement rights for different purposes to land but does not own the underlying Fee land. The specifics of Easement rights may vary and are typically described in the deeds between Valley Water and the property owner.

14. **What if one part of the project's proposed site is Valley Water owned and another part is owned by another municipality or entity?**
Valley Water requires that all necessary regulatory and Valley Water permits are obtained before commencing project activities on privately owned property or Valley Water owned property. Therefore, Grantees who can show progress in obtaining the required permits are given more points. Contact Valley Water staff in Community Projects Review Unit for more information on Valley Water permits for work proposed on Valley Water owned land, easement right of way or affecting Valley Water facilities

15. **Can funding be applied to a project on private land?**
Valley Water will not fund a project if it cannot show a benefit to the general public and provide

public access, as outlined in the priority RFPs. Projects that benefit only a private group will not be considered.

16. **Does Valley Water have the map of existing trails in the county?**
Valley Water does not currently have any maps of existing trails readily accessible. It is recommended to contact the Santa Clara County Parks Department or the city in which the trail is located to acquire maps.

17. **Do you get more points for proposing enhancements to multiple species habitats?**
Only if the species are considered species of special concern. More points will be allotted for proposed improvements to special status species habitats. Please refer to the priority RFP for the Minimum Requirements & Evaluation Criteria guidelines.

18. **Is erosion control eligible for grant funding?**
Erosion control work could be a project task for D3 grants, as long as the overall project meets one of the D3 objectives as outlined in the RFP.

19. **For the "Environmental Justice" bonus point criteria, how is a "disadvantaged community" defined?**
Valley Water uses the definition as identified by California's Environmental Protection Agency: "disadvantaged community" as a census tract that is "disproportionately burdened by, and vulnerable to, multiple sources of pollution." Census tracts that fit these criteria are "the top 25% scoring areas from CalEnviroScreen along with other areas with high amounts of pollution and low populations."

To determine whether a specific community or address is considered "disadvantaged," please visit this link: https://oehha.ca.gov/calenviroscreen/sb535

20. **Before submitting the application, can we contact you to review the project?**
No. The grant process is meant to be an open, competitive process; therefore, staff will not review any grant proposals prior to submission. However, staff will be available to provide technical assistance on the application process, answer specific questions about the online application system or process, including eligibility requirements, required documents for submission, and clarification on the evaluation criteria.

21. **Can I submit a hard copy application via mail, fax or email?**
No, applicants must apply online through the Fluxx online grants management system at valleywater.fluxx.io. For assistance with using Fluxx, please contact the grants staff at grants@valleywater.org.

Mini-Grants

1. **Can multiple individuals from one location apply for separate mini-grants?**
   Yes, multiple people from one location are encouraged to apply provided the proposed projects have different scopes.

2. **How long is the mini-grant process?**
   The review and approval process for mini-grants takes approximately 6-8 weeks.

3. **Is there a running balance of available grant funding available online?**
   No, there is no running fund balance available to view online. The Board has allocated $200,000 total for this fiscal year for the D3 mini-grants program and $100,000 total for the A2 mini-grants program through December 31, 2020. Each project award is capped at $5,000.

4. **What are some examples of wildlife restoration projects that can be done for $5K?**
   Since the purpose of the mini-grants is to provide seed funding to encourage broader and long-term community engagement in wildlife habitat restoration or stewardship activities for D3, and water conservation for A2, then the funding can be used to kick start a larger project.

   Examples: educational activities or outreach pieces that promote watershed stewardship and wildlife habitat restoration; developing a community garden to plant native species; or conduct a training or workshop specifically focused on watershed stewardship.

5. **Is there a time limit for completion for mini-grants?**
   Projects funded under the mini-grants must be completed within two years following the execution of the agreement. Failure to complete the project within the two years or agreed upon timeframe may result in the grantee not receiving the final balance.

6. **Is the payment of the mini-grants reimbursement-based?**
   Mini-grant funds will be dispersed 50% upon executing the final agreement and 50% upon completion of the project.

7. **What is turnaround time for mini-grants?**
   Mini-grant applicants will be notified of their funding status within approximately 6-8 weeks of submitting the application online. If the mini-grant is awarded, the grant agreement execution process takes about 2-4 months.

8. **Can you apply for a mini-grant more than once? If we run out of mini-grant funds, can we apply again for the same project?**
   The purpose of the mini-grant program is not to cover all expenses for a project, but rather, to provide a seed amount that will kick start stewardship activities. Therefore, applicants cannot apply for multiple mini-grants for the same project.

9. **Can you apply for a mini-grant for the same project in multiple locations?**
   If a project has various sites, then each site would be eligible for a mini-grant and would have to apply as separate projects. However, if different stages of the same project are being conducted at different locations, it would still be considered the same project, and therefore, would only be eligible for one mini-grant.

Definitions of commonly used terms:

- **Agreement:** A contract between Valley Water and the Applicant specifying the payment of funds by Valley Water's Safe, Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection Special Tax for the performance of the Project Scope within the Project Period by the Grantee.

- **Application:** The individual Grant Application, submitted electronically via Fluxx, and its supporting documentation to this Grant Program.

- **CEQA:** The California Environmental Quality Act, Public Resources Code, Section 21000 et. seq.; Title 14, California Code of Regulations Section 15000 et. Seq. CEQA requires state and local government agencies to inform decision makers and the public about the potential environmental impacts of proposed projects, and to reduce those environmental impacts to the extent feasible. As a public agency, Valley Water is required to comply with CEQA.

- **Construction Costs:** Expenses directly resulting from new construction of physical works. Maintenance work where existing facilities are replaced in kind is not considered construction. **Please note that for B3 and D3 grants, implementation of the project can be equated with construction.**

- **Development:** Means improvements to real property by construction of new facilities or additions to existing facilities.

- **Direct Costs:** Project expenses attributable only to the Project itself such as construction costs.

- **Environmental Enhancement:** Action taken by Valley Water that benefits the environment, is NOT mitigation, and is undertaken voluntarily. Enhancement actions may include environmental restoration, rehabilitation, preservation, or creation. In instances where enhancements are in the same vicinity as a mitigation project, actions must exceed required compliance to compensate for environmental impacts to be considered environmental enhancements.

- **Grantee:** an agency or organization receiving funding from this Program, as determined appropriate by the Valley Water Board of Directors.

- **Indirect Costs:** Expenses that are not attributable to a project itself but are an overhead or support cost including non-project-related personnel and administrative expenses.

- **Interested Party:** An agency or organization requesting funding through this Grant Program.

- **Mitigation:** Action taken by the Valley Water to fulfill CEQA/NEPA, permit requirements and court mandated mitigation to avoid, minimize, rectify, or reduce adverse environmental impacts, or compensate for the impact(s) by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments.

- **Non-construction Costs:** Project-related expenses that do not result in a Capital Improvement but are considered necessary to achieve the Project Scope, e.g., permit application fees, signage, or public outreach.

- **Preservation:** Action taken by Valley Water to protect an ecosystem or habitat area by removing a threat to that ecosystem or habitat, including regulatory actions and the purchase of land and easements.

- **Project:** The planned activity, or development to be accomplished with Valley Water grant funds. If the activity is part of a larger effort, clear delineation must be shown for the scope, schedule, and budget of what Valley Water is funding.

- **Project Period:** The term of the Project Agreement and the timeframe for Project completion. Project Scope: The description of activities to be accomplished to fulfill the Project Agreement.

- **Stewardship:** Stewardship means to entrust the careful and responsible management of the environment and natural resources to one's care for the benefit of the greater community.

- **Species of Special Concern:** The [California Department of Fish and Wildlife](#) uses the following definition:

  A Species of Special Concern (SSC) is a species, subspecies, or distinct population of an animal* native to California that currently satisfies one or more of the following (not necessarily mutually exclusive) criteria**: is extirpated from the State or, in the case of birds, is extirpated in its primary season or breeding role; is listed as Federally-, but not State-, threatened or endangered; meets the State definition of threatened or endangered but has not formally been listed; is experiencing, or formerly experienced, serious (noncyclical) population declines or range retractions (not reversed) that, if continued or resumed, could qualify it for State threatened or endangered status; has naturally small populations exhibiting high susceptibility to risk from any factor(s), that if realized, could lead to declines that would qualify it for State threatened or endangered status.
  *for the purposes of this discussion, "animal" means fish, amphibian, reptile, bird and mammal
  **criteria for fishes are similar except that Federally listed taxa are not defined as SSCs