



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Mini-Grants

Note: This is the FAQ for Mini-Grants. For the Standard Grants FAQ, please visit www.valleywater.org/standardgrants.

- 1. Could Valley Water share examples of past projects that received grant funding?**
To view a complete listing of all grants and partnerships awarded through June 30, 2021, please view the latest Safe, Clean Water Program Annual Report, [Appendix C](#).
- 2. Can multiple individuals from one location or organization apply for separate mini-grants?**
Yes, multiple people from one location or organization are encouraged to apply provided the proposed projects have different scopes.
- 3. 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. For example, the FY 2022 fiscal year is from July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022.
- 4. Is the 25% match for the total project cost or for Valley Water's grant award amount?**
The applicant must demonstrate a 25% match of the total project's cost.
- 5. Can an applicant apply for a grant with the matching contribution coming at a date later than the grant project period?**
No, the applicant must demonstrate at least 25% match as part of the minimum match requirement at the time of the application submission. If approved for funding, the applicant must show documentation of the matching contribution(s). The match can be monetary or in-kind.
- 6. 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 2020, the California volunteer value was estimated at \$33.61 per hour, per person. To find the current value in California, visit the following website: <https://independentsector.org/value-of-volunteer-time-2021/>. Enter your name and email to access the volunteer hours in California.
- 7. 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.
- 8. Are there 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. Renting construction equipment and purchasing non-construction equipment is permissible provided the project requires buying and installing such equipment.

Example: In 2014, a Pollution Prevention grant was awarded 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.

9. Does the proposed project need CEQA review prior to the agreement being awarded?

No, California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review is not required prior to grant proposal submission or award (for projects that require a review). All mini-grant projects regardless of type and size will be reviewed by Valley Water's environmental planning unit. If the applicant is serving as the Lead Agency, the proposal shall be reviewed by the Lead Agency's environmental planners for CEQA and provided to Valley Water for Responsible Agency review, if applicable.

10. 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 land 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.

11. What if 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. Contact Valley Water staff in the 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. To contact the Community Projects Review Unit, call (408) 630-2650, email CPRU@valleywater.org or visit the [CPRU website](#).

12. If the applicant is a current Adopt-A-Creek (AAC) partner, can the proposed grant project include creek clean-up activities that are planned as part of the Adopt-A-Creek requirements?

No, grant funding cannot be used towards creek cleanup activities that are planned and/or in an area permitted by the Adopt-A-Creek Program. See list of non-reimbursable cleanup budget items below.

13. Can the proposed grant project include creek cleanup activities that are planned in conjunction with another Valley Water grant or another organization?

Yes, but these activities are not reimbursable. To be clear, Valley Water will not reimburse for the following cleanup budget items:

- volunteer work
- work or supplies paid for by another funding source or grant that would result in double payment for a single item/service
- any additional supplies or waste disposal service provided free of charge by another entity such as a public agency or nonprofit
- creek cleanup activities and supplies provided as part of major cleanup events such as National River Cleanup Day and California Coastal Cleanup Day, or any other Valley Water coordinated cleanup

14. Can funding be applied to a project on private land?

Yes, as long as the applicant can demonstrate a benefit to the general public and provide public access. Projects that benefit only a private property owner or private group will not be considered.

15. Does Valley Water have a map of existing trails in Santa Clara County?

No, it is recommended to contact the Santa Clara County Parks Department or the city in which the trail is located to acquire maps.

16. Is erosion control eligible for grant funding?

Yes, erosion control work could be an eligible project task as long as the overall project meets one or more of the Safe, Clean Water benefits.

17. What is the award timeline for mini-grants?

The review and approval process for mini-grants takes approximately 6-8 weeks. Each application's processing time varies based on the applicant's ability to provide Valley Water with all the required information. For a complete timeline, please refer to the timeline on the mini-grant resource page.

18. Is there a running balance of available mini-grant funding available online?

Currently, we do not have a running fund balance available to view online. The Board has allocated \$100,000 each fiscal year for the mini-grants program. Each project award is capped at \$5,000. If the entire allocated funds have been awarded out for the fiscal year, the applications will close until the next fiscal year.

19. What are some examples of projects that can be done for \$5,000?

Many types of small-scale projects qualify as long as it meets one or more of the Safe, Clean Water project benefits. Since the purpose of the mini-grants program is to provide seed funding to encourage broader and long-term community engagement, the funding can also be used to kick start a larger project.

Examples: research or pilot a water conservation technology or irrigation system; educational activities or outreach pieces that promote wildlife habitat restoration; developing a community garden to plant native species; hosting a creek cleanup event; or conduct a training or workshop specifically focused on watershed stewardship or water conservation.

20. Is there a time limit for completing a mini-grant project?

Projects funded under the mini-grants program must be completed within two years following the agreement effective date. Failure to complete the project within the two years or agreed-upon timeframe may result in the grantee not receiving the final balance. No amendments are allowed for mini-grants.

21. Is the payment of the mini-grants reimbursement-based?

No, mini-grant funds are not reimbursement-based. The initial 50% of the grant award amount is provided upfront upon executing the agreement, and the remaining 50% is provided upon completion of the project and final report submittal.

22. Can an applicant apply for a mini-grant more than once? If we run out of mini-grant funds, can we apply again for the same project?

No, because the purpose of the mini-grant program is not to cover all expenses for a project or program, 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.

23. Can an applicant apply for a mini-grant for the same project in multiple locations?

Yes, 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.

24. Before submitting the application, can we contact you to review the project?

Yes, since mini-grants are meant to help kick start projects, staff can provide a brief review of any grant proposals prior to submission. Staff is also 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.

25. 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. Applications submitted outside of Fluxx will not be accepted.

Definitions of commonly used terms:

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

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

Application: The individual Grant Application Cover Sheet and its supporting documentation to this Grant Program. FY2022 Safe, Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection Program for Priority F9: Grants and Partnerships for Safe, Clean Water, Flood Protection and Environmental Stewardship.

CEQA: The California Environmental Quality Act, *Public Resources Code*, Section 21000 et. seq.; Title 14, *California Code of Regulations* Section 15000 et. Seq.

Construction Costs: Expenses directly resulting from new construction of physical works. Maintenance work where existing facilities are replaced in kind is not considered 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.

Mitigation: Action taken 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.

Safe, Clean Water: Safe, Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection Program

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.

Valley Water: Santa Clara Valley Water District