



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Standard Grants

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

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. When does the applicant's governing board resolution need to be submitted?

If the applicant's organization has a governing body (such as a City Council, Board of Supervisors, Board of Directors, etc.), Valley Water must receive notice that the governing board has agreed to accept grant funding from Valley Water in the event a project is approved. If you cannot provide the resolution at the time of application submittal, please contact Grants staff.

This requirement does not apply to applicant organizations that do not have a governing body. Please contact Grants staff if you need assistance determining this.

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

Yes, but not for the same project. As long as the project scope is different, an organization can apply for more

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. For example, the FY 2022 fiscal year is from July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022.

5. 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.

6. 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.

7. Is the 25% match requirement for planning or implementation?

The 25% match is for the total project cost and matching can be attributed to 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 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.

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. 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. Please refer to the eligible and ineligible costs listed in the Standard Grants Guideline.

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.

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. 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 applicants are encouraged to provide as much detailed information as reasonable about the project activities in their Project Scope, including details such as project site location(s) and access routes, species and habitat(s) that could be affected, activities, ground disturbance (such as digging, planting, installation, excavation, etc.), work schedule, expected equipment, and any environmental concerns that may exist.

If you already know which public agency will serve as Lead Agency for CEQA or have started any CEQA inquiries or planning, please indicate that in your application. The most up-to-date CEQA documentation should be submitted with the application for Valley Water's review. Proposals that indicate that the project is further along in the process of acquiring the necessary permits and completing environmental review (i.e., CEQA) will be scored higher than those that are not as far along. Please refer to the Standard Grant Guidelines for the Minimum Requirements & Evaluation Criteria guidelines.

If awarded a grant, CEQA review should be completed by the lead agency prior to executing the grant agreement. Grants staff will likely request further information and documentation related to CEQA.

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 land purposes, 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 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, applicants who can show progress in obtaining the required permits will receive more

points. 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](#).

15. 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.

16. 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.

17. 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

18. 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.

19. Does the proposed project receive more points for enhancements that benefit multiple species habitats?

Yes, if the species are considered species of special concern. More points are also allotted for proposed improvements to special status species habitats. Please refer to the Standard Grant Guidelines for the Minimum Requirements & Evaluation Criteria guidelines.

20. When reviewing the One Water Objectives for the Project Evaluation Criteria, where can objectives F and G be found?

The previous iterations of One Water had 10 objectives. Moving forward, there are 5 objectives. E, F and G are now primarily captured in Objective D (which is Valley Water's stewardship/enhancement objective for One Water).

21. 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 as outlined in the Standard Grant Guidelines criteria for that project type.

22. For the “Environmental Justice” bonus point criteria, how is a “disadvantaged community” defined?

Valley Water defines a Disadvantaged Community as an area whose residents are disproportionately impacted by a combination of economic, health, and environmental burdens, such as poverty, high unemployment, environmental pollution, the presence of hazardous waste, or environmental degradation. These communities often are comprised of people who have suffered historical discrimination based on race, color, national origin, tribe, culture, income, immigration status, or English language proficiency.

For the purposes of Valley Water policies, projects, services, and programs, disadvantaged communities include any of the following:

- Low-income households (Household incomes below 80 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI) in Santa Clara County), as of 2020 AMI for average household of three is \$100,950; however, AMI is updated annually.
- Low-income census tracts (Census tracts where aggregated household incomes are less than 80 percent of the Area Median Income for Santa Clara County), as of 2020 AMI for average household of three is \$100,950; however, AMI is updated annually; and/or
- An area defined by California Environmental Protection Agency (pursuant to Section 39711 of the California Health and Safety Code), using the CalEnviroScreen tool, which was developed to determine communities most burdened by environmental, socioeconomic, and health factors.

The applicant will receive the full bonus points for this criteria if the location of the proposed project is considered a disadvantaged community according to either of the maps below. The address does not need to be on both maps, and the applicant does not score more points for project location(s) being on both maps.

To determine whether a specific community or project location is a low-income household or in a low-income census tract, enter the address location using this map: [Santa Clara County Low Income Census Tracts \(Poverty Zone\)](#)

To determine whether a specific community or project location is in a disadvantaged community, enter the address location using this map: [CalEPA Proposed SB 535 Disadvantaged Communities](#).

- If your address is in the red or blue area, it is considered a disadvantaged community.
- This is determined by the highest scoring 25% Census tracts from the CalEnviroScreen platform. Disadvantaged Communities designations from both CalEnviroScreen 3.0 and the draft CalEnviroScreen 4.0 will be considered for the “Environmental Justice” criteria.

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

The grant process is meant to be an open, transparent, 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.

24. 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 using Fluxx, please contact grants staff at grants@valleywater.org or 408-630-2080. 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