



STANDARD GRANTS IMPLEMENTATION CATEGORY FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Note: This is the FAQ for the Standard Grants – Implementation Category. For the Mini-Grant FAQ, please visit valleywater.org/minigrants. For the Refill Station Grant FAQ, please visit valleywater.org/refillstation.

Standard Grants - Implementation

1. Could Valley Water share examples of past projects that received grant funding?

Implementation grants are a new funding category this year. Valley Water has funded past projects through previous grant programs that may include similar elements to the specific criteria of this program.

Learn about some of our past grant projects on our Grants Success Stories page: valleywater.org/grants-success-stories.

For a cumulative list of standard grants awarded from FY22 to present, please visit: <https://fta.valleywater.org/dl/rJKhprRfB6pk>.

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 documentation that the governing board has agreed to accept grant funding from Valley Water in the event a project is approved. Valley Water recommends that applicants use and refer to the sample resolution found on the Grants resource webpage (<https://www.valleywater.org/grant-resources>)

3. Due to scheduling, my agency will not have its resolution approved before the deadline. Will you accept alternative documents?

We understand that it often takes time to present a resolution to a governing body. Therefore, we will accept a PDF that confirms the following:

- You are in the process of obtaining the resolution.
- You have identified the meeting date when the resolution will be presented to your governing body (or likely meeting dates if not yet finalized).
- You will email the approved resolution to the Grants team as soon as possible and no later than the date the Valley Water Board of Directors approve the grant proposal.

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

Yes, an organization can apply for more than one grant, but not for the same project.

5. What is Valley Water’s fiscal year?

Valley Water’s fiscal year (FY) starts on July 1 and runs through June 30 of the following calendar year. For example, FY 2026 is from July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026.

6. Is the 15% match for the total project cost or for Valley Water’s grant award amount?

For Implementation Grant projects, the applicant must demonstrate a 15% match of the total project cost. The match can be monetary or in-kind.

7. 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 they can meet 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.

8. Is there a standard rate for estimating the value of volunteer hours as part of the 15% match?

To calculate the in-kind value of volunteer hours, please use the Independent Sector’s estimated hourly rate for volunteer time. In 2024, the California volunteer value was estimated at \$40.14 per hour, per person. Please visit the website here: independentsector.org/resource/value-of-volunteer-time.

9. 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.

Grant funds may not be used to purchase operational equipment such as office supplies and audiovisual equipment.

10. Does the proposed project need CEQA compliance review prior to the grant being awarded?

Yes, California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance review must be completed prior to application submission or award.

Applicants are required to serve as or identify the public agency that will serve as the lead agency for CEQA in their application and the certified or adopted CEQA documentation must be submitted for Valley Water's review.

11. What is the difference between Valley Water fee ownership 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. The specifics of easement rights vary and are typically described in the deeds between Valley Water and the property owner.

You can look up your project location in this interactive map to get a better understanding of Valley Water's land ownership: gis.valleywater.org/FeeEasement.

12. 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 access or encroachment permits be obtained before commencing project activities on any property. Applicants who can show progress in obtaining these required land use permits will receive more points on their application.

Encroachment permits are required for any work that takes place on Valley Water land, easement, or facility. More information can be found on the [Encroachment Permits](#) page.

13. 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 are not eligible for funding.

14. Can the proposed grant project include creek clean-up activities that are planned as part of Valley Water's 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, such as participation in National River Cleanup Day and Coastal Cleanup Day. See list of non-reimbursable cleanup budget items below.

15. Can the proposed grant project include creek cleanup activities that are planned in conjunction with another Valley Water grant/program 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

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 the eligible project criteria for implementation grants as outlined in the Standard Grant Guidelines.

17. 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. To ensure fairness and avoid any potential conflicts of interest, Valley Water staff will not provide feedback on draft 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. Applicants for Implementation Grants are encouraged to schedule a meeting with Grants staff to discuss project eligibility before submitting an application. (Calendly link: <https://calendly.com/d/cnjp-f2p-nxr/valley-water-standard-grant-meeting>)

18. 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.

19. Can I include an inflation adjustment in my project's budget?

Applicants may build an inflation adjustment as part of their project's budget. However, applicants are recommended to include a supplemental narrative explaining the inflation adjustment along with the budget. Proposed projects require a well-defined budget showing tasks, resources, and matching funds. We encourage applicants to ensure their budget is realistic and provide additional information, if needed, to assist the evaluation panel in their understanding and review of the project and proposed approach.

Please note: If your project is awarded, all items listed in the budget will be incorporated in your agreement and will need supporting documentation to be requested for reimbursement.

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

Please contact the Santa Clara County Parks Department or the city in which the trail is located to inquire about maps.

21. Can a non-governmental organization be eligible for Implementation Grants?

Organizations that are not public agencies may participate as partners and are encouraged to work with a public agency that can apply as the primary applicant.

Standard Grants Redesign

1. What were the key factors that drove the need for a redesign in 2025?

Valley Water initiated the grants redesign project to update and improve the Safe, Clean Water Grants and Partnerships Program to align with [Measure S](#), which was approved by voters in 2020, to address the recommendations from the 2021 Grants Management Performance Audit, and in response to grantee feedback. These highlighted the need for streamlining and right-sizing the grants administration, broaden grant opportunities, enhance funding accessibility, and improve grant management.

2. What changes were made with the redesign?

The 2025 redesign expanded grant opportunities, make funding more accessible, incorporate industry best practices, and improve the grantee experience. The grants redesign focused on two parts:

- Grants administration redesign – This part focused on right-sizing the grants administration for grant applications, agreements, reporting and invoicing processes and requirements.
- Standard grants project criteria redesign – This part focused on updating the standard grant project types and criteria to align with the expanded Safe, Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection Program under [Measure S](#). The new criteria accommodates innovation and new ideas through multi-benefit projects. It included scaling the application and requirements to fit the size, risk and complexity of each individual grant.

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.

Agreement Term: The period beginning on the agreement effective date and ending on the date of termination or expiration of the agreement.

Agreement Effective Date: The agreement effective date is the date when the agreement becomes legally binding and active and the terms of the agreement apply.

Applicant: An individual or organization that requests a Safe, Clean Water Standard Grant but has not yet been awarded one.

Application: The FY26 Safe, Clean Water Program Standard Grant Program application and accompanying attachments submitted to Valley Water for Safe, Clean Water Grant Program.

Authorized Signatory: The individual is who can sign agreements and invoices on behalf of the organization. The organization must provide written documentation from its governing body to verify this authorization.

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.

Environmental Resource Investigation: formal inquiry or systematic study related to environmental resources. Examples may include geotechnical or water testing, cultural resource investigations, or biological surveys.

Grantee: An agency or organization receiving funding from this Grant Program.

Grant Application Deadline: The exact date and time the application must be submitted via Fluxx for acceptance by Valley Water.

Grant Award Amount: The not-to-exceed amount awarded to the grantee by the Valley Water Board of Directors for the project.

Grant Request Amount: The total grant dollar amount requested by the applicant in the project budget.

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.

Implementation Grants: Grants for shovel-ready projects that have advanced to the stage where planning, design, land tenure, and engineering are substantially complete or nearly complete.

Lead Agency: the public agency that has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving a project.

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.

Primary Contact: The individual responsible for communication between the applicant organization and Valley Water. This person manages all correspondence, provides updates on the projects, and ensures that any questions or requirements from Valley Water are addressed promptly.

Project: The planned activity, or development to be accomplished with Valley Water grant funds. Projects are unique, time-bound initiatives with specific deliverables and definite start and endpoints. 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 Budget: The full cost of the project, including funds from all funding sources.

Project Schedule: The estimated start and end date for each task.

Project Scope: The description of activities to be accomplished to fulfill the project agreement.

Responsible Agency: the public agency which proposes to carry out or approve a project for which a lead agency is preparing or has prepared an environmental document.

Safe, Clean Water Program: 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.