



## **Meeting Summary for Safe Clean Water Public Education and Community Engagement Grants Program - Public Input Session #1**

*This meeting summary was created using AI technology. It has been edited by Water Foundation staff for clarity and accuracy.*

### **Quick recap**

The Water Foundation introduced the draft Safe, Clean Water Grants Program in collaboration with Los Angeles County Public Works, which will provide funding for public education and community engagement activities in support of the Safe Clean Water Program. This first cycle of Grants Program has a total of \$8.5 million to give out. The team encouraged feedback from the participants to improve the draft program before it is finalized. The meeting also discussed the application process, eligibility criteria, and the evaluation matrix, which will be used to assess proposals.

### **Summary**

#### Safe, Clean Water Grants Program Discussion

Alex Paxton and Ava Farriday from the Water Foundation introduced the draft Safe, Clean Water Grants Program and sought input from the participants to improve it. They clarified that while they would consider all suggestions, not all could be incorporated due to program objectives, administrative challenges, and legal or policy considerations. Ava also disclosed the use of Zoom's AI meeting summary feature and noted that the meeting recording and program materials would be posted on the foundation's website. The meeting began with an acknowledgment of the program's location on Indigenous land.

#### New Grants Program for Stormwater Management

Alex introduced the new Grants Program that will provide funding for public education and community engagement efforts in support of the Safe Clean Water Program. The Grants Program, a collaboration between Los Angeles County Public Works and the Water Foundation, was developed in response to the county's water management challenges and the need to invest in underserved communities. The four objectives of the Grants Program are to increase community awareness of the Safe Clean Water Program, support community members in envisioning their own stormwater solutions, engage community members in active stewardship of neighborhood green stormwater infrastructure, and increase community understanding of stormwater management in LA County, particularly in communities most impacted by climate change. This Grants Program will be funded as long as the Safe Clean Water program is active.

## Grants Program Details and Eligibility

Ava presented the details of the draft Grants Program, which includes a Notice of Funding Opportunity for a total of \$8.5 million. The program divides funding into three tiers based on the scope and duration of the activity. Eligible applicants include nonprofits, federally recognized Tribes, municipal agencies, and school districts. Ava also outlined the types of activities that are eligible for funding, such as community meetings, project-specific community outreach, and Tribal engagement. Ineligible activities include lobbying, electioneering, and any activities that would trigger CEQA review. Ava also presented an evaluation criteria matrix for assessing proposals with three categories: Safe Clean Water Program alignment, feasibility, and communities served.

## Timeline and Feedback Process

Ava outlined the upcoming timeline for the Grants Program, which is set to launch in early September with a rolling application period. The program will evaluate grant applications and award funding every 2-3 months, with the final application period closing in May 2025. Ava emphasized that the program is still in the feedback stage and encouraged participants to provide their input either verbally, through the zoom chat, or by email before the deadline on August 5th. Alex confirmed the three ways to provide feedback and reminded participants that the next public input session would be on July 24th.

## Public Input, Questions, and Discussion

Ava facilitated a discussion with participants on the call, taking feedback on the draft program and answering clarifying questions. Alex clarified that any qualified entity could apply, with a preference given to those serving Disadvantaged Communities. Questions were raised about potential conflicts of interest, particularly regarding whether organizations with a watershed coordinator contract or a WASC member would be able to apply. Alex said that the intent was to have these organizations be eligible, but that precautions would need to be taken to avoid conflicts of interest. Kirk clarified via the chat that any conflicts of interest would be discussed with County Counsel to avoid legal issues. It was also stated that there is currently no cap on awards by watershed area, and there is an intention to make sure funds get disbursed throughout all watershed areas.

Alex clarified that the grant money cannot be used for physical project construction to avoid triggering CEQA review. However, the development of stormwater project concepts could be eligible for funding. There was also a discussion on the potential issue of multiple groups engaging with the same community, with the suggestion to encourage coordination to prevent overburdening residents. One participant asked if organizations considering projects across multiple watershed areas need to submit multiple applications, to which Alex clarified that this was not necessary unless there were multiple entities collaboratively applying for the same project.

The team discussed the application and funding process for their grant program. Alex explained that proposals would be evaluated every few months, and if recommended for funding, the applicant would be notified and a grant agreement would be entered into. Ava and Alex also confirmed that Indigenous organizations and Tribes are eligible to apply, and that tribal engagement is an eligible grant activity. The team also took feedback and questions on potential eligibility of small restoration projects, with a commitment to consider this input. It was suggested that other eligible activities could potentially cover art, poetry, or film as an education method, provided it advances the program's goals. Ava clarified that there were no specific timelines tied to the tiers, and nonprofit organizations not based in LA County but whose project served Los Angeles County residents could apply, provided the applicant can demonstrate a connection to the communities they intend to serve.

Ava clarified that the award amounts depend on the activities and the timeframe requested in a grant application, with a hard deadline set for July 31, 2026. Details about the rollout of the other two educational programs, K through 12 and workforce training, remained uncertain, and the Water Foundation clarified that they are not involved in the other two programs and could not provide any definitive answers on their status.

At the end of the meeting, attendees discussed various other suggestions for improving program accessibility and outreach. Ava reminded attendees to provide feedback via email and share program information widely to reach a broader audience, while Alex emphasized the importance of signing up for email notifications on the program via the Water Foundation's website.

### **Next steps**

Ava and Alex will consider feedback from the meeting and from comments sent via email, and incorporate suggestions into the final version of the Safe Clean Water Grants Program as appropriate.