



# Santa Clara Valley Water District

**File No.:** 21-0067

**Agenda Date:** 2/23/2021  
**Item No.:** 2.9.

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## BOARD AGENDA MEMORANDUM

### **SUBJECT:**

Approve Fiscal Year 2021 Grants for the Safe, Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection Program.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

- A. Review and discuss staff's recommendations for Fiscal Year 2021 Safe, Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection Program (Safe, Clean Water Program) grant awards;
- B. Authorize the Chief Executive Officer to approve and execute agreements for Priority B7: Support Volunteer Cleanup Efforts and Education grants for four (4) projects in a total amount not-to-exceed \$188,558;
- C. Authorize the Chief Executive Officer to approve and execute agreements for Priority D3: Access to Trails and Open Space grants for one (1) project in a total amount not-to-exceed \$25,530;
- D. Authorize the Chief Executive Officer to approve and execute amendments to the recommended grant agreements, extending their terms up to twenty-four (24) additional months and with no revisions to their not-to-exceed grant amounts; and
- E. Receive information about the Pilot Priority A2: Water Conservation Mini-Grant Program.

### **SUMMARY:**

The existing Safe, Clean Water Program provides seven grant cycles for each program priority. FY21 is a grant cycle year for Priority B7: Support Volunteer Cleanup Efforts and Education (B7 Cleanups and Education), and Priority D3: Access to Trails and Open Space (D3 Trails and Open Space).

On September 28, 2020, Valley Water released information to the public regarding the availability of grant funding via the public website and new online grants management system, Fluxx, and requested proposals to fund projects for B7 Cleanups and Education, and D3 Trails and Open Space. Grant applications were accepted through December 1, 2020.

Outreach efforts for all grant programs included the following:

- Virtual event promotions via email and presentation slides to Valley Water sponsorship organizations on September 25, 2020
- Nextdoor posts to all Board Districts in the county on September 28, 2020
- Request for Proposals announcement to existing key stakeholders in Santa Clara County and the grant program distribution list of more than 135 recipients on September 29, 2020

- Youth Commission email announcement on September 29, 2020
- Press release on October 5, 2020
- CEO Bulletin during the week of October 10, 2020
- Pre-proposal workshops conducted on October 14 and 22, 2020
- Valley Water blog post on October 19, 2020
- Water Commission announcement at the meeting on October 28, 2020
- Almaden Times media coverage on the week of October 30 to November 12, 2020
- Four (4) social media posts and boosted posts throughout the solicitation period, including a promotional video and grant project highlight stories
- Mercury News media coverage on November 8 and 23, 2020
- Notifications sent to local elected officials, city managers, and executive leaders in the County
- Notifications sent to countywide neighborhood associations, community leaders, civic organizations, environmental groups, and local non-profits
- Other direct outreach through various programs, including Creek Stewardship, Recycled and Purified Water, the Office of Government Relations, and Education Outreach

#### ***Proposal Review Process and Evaluation Criteria***

A total of six (6) applications were received for the FY21 grant opportunities:

- Five (5) applications for B7 Cleanups and Education grants
- One (1) application for D3 Trails and Open Space grants

Staff formed an evaluation panel for each of the grant priorities to evaluate the applications. The evaluation panels consisted of internal subject matter experts on volunteer creek cleanups, trails, open space, environmental stewardship and education, and permits and regulations. The evaluators scored the proposals based on the evaluation criteria identified in the proposal guidelines that were approved by the Board on February 26, 2019 (see Attachment 1).

#### ***Funding Recommendations***

Staff determined the recommended funding amounts based on the grant allocation process that was approved by the Board on February 26, 2019 (see Attachment 1). According to the approved allocation process, the recommended funding amount for each application is based on the average scores from the evaluation panelists.

Scores, FY21 funding recommendations, and calculated funding allocations for each of the grant priorities are presented in Attachment 2.

#### **B7 Support Volunteer Cleanup Efforts and Education**

The review panel recommended approving four of the five B7 Cleanups and Education grant applications for grant awards based on their clear objectives and anticipated outcomes in cleaning up creeks and waterways, addressing environmental stewardship, supporting volunteers, and educating the community.

The B7 Cleanups and Education Grant Allocation Matrix determined funding recommendations as follows:

- **Tier 1:** Proposals with an average score between 85-100 points will receive between 70-100%

of the requested funding.

- **Tier 2:** Proposals with an average score between 70-84 points will receive between 30-69% of the requested funding.

**Recommended B7 Cleanups and Education Projects:**

1. Bay Area Older Adults for Watershed Waste Reduction Program for a total amount not-to-exceed \$40,985.
2. Grassroots Ecology for Coyote/Stevens Creek Watershed Community Engagement Project for a total amount not-to-exceed \$49,980.
3. IISME, dba Ignited for Santa Clara Water Weeks for a total amount not-to-exceed \$47,593.
4. Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition for Wheels and Waterways for a total amount not-to-exceed \$50,000.

One application was not eligible because the applicant organization did not meet the minimum eligibility requirements as described in the standard grant guidelines.

**Ineligible B7 Cleanups and Education Project:**

- Gilroy After Hours Rotary Club for Gilroy Waterways Clean Up

Staff reached out to the ineligible applicant to discuss the eligibility criteria and other available grant funding opportunities. The applicant has since applied for a mini-grant and their mini-grant application is being reviewed.

**D3 Access to Trails and Open Space**

The review panel recommended approving the one D3 Trails and Open Space grant application for grant award based on its creative, community-based approach to enhancing open space and access to trails in an urban environment and plan to increase awareness about the creeks, waterways, and environment.

The D3 Trails and Open Space Grant Allocation Matrix determined funding recommendations as follows:

- **Tier 1:** Proposals with an average score between 85-100 points will receive between 70-100% of the requested funding.
- **Tier 2:** Proposals with an average score between 70-84 points will receive between 30-69% of the requested funding.

**Recommended D3 Trails and Open Space Project:**

1. Community Express for La Sendera Community Art Trail for a total amount not-to-exceed \$25,530.

Staff attribute the low number of applications submitted this cycle in part due to feedback received that the impacts of COVID-19 on grantees' and applicants' financial and staffing resources created uncertainties for long-term project planning and inability to confidently commit to project performance and project schedules this year.

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If the Board approves staff's grant funding recommendations, the CEO will execute grant agreements for the awarded projects, after they comply with CEQA requirements.

***Grant Agreement Provisions***

To allow for flexibility for grantee organizations to complete their projects in accordance with the evolving COVID-19 guidance and directives, staff will add an additional year to both agreement terms for a total of four (4) years for B7 Cleanups and Education projects and six (6) years for D3 Trails and Open Space projects. In previous years, B7 Cleanups and Education projects have had three (3) year agreement terms and D3 Trails and Open Space projects have had five (5) year agreement terms.

Grant agreements will include provisions to allow for no-cost term extensions, if necessary and appropriate, to achieve project outcomes. In previous years, the Board has delegated authority to the CEO to execute no-cost time extension amendments for up to twelve (12) additional months and with no revisions to their not-to-exceed grant amounts. Staff recommends that the Board delegate authority to the CEO to extend grant agreement terms for up to twenty-four (24) additional months due to the uncertainties of the evolving COVID-19 guidance and directives. This would help provide flexibility as well as expediency in facilitating a relatively shorter amendment process for agreements that do not require revisions to the not-to-exceed grant agreements. However, any amendments resulting in changes in scope of work or not-to exceed funding would continue to require Board approval.

The grant agreements will contain the standard provisions related to communications including:

- inclusion of Safe, Clean Water Program logo on all project materials presented to the public;
- all materials that include Safe, Clean Water Program logo are subject to review and approval by Valley Water;
- mention of "Safe, Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection Program" as appropriate when funding sources for the project are printed or presented;
- early notification to and invitations provided to Valley Water for any project related events; and
- invitation with speaking roles for members of the Board of Directors at project groundbreaking and opening ceremonies.

The grant agreements will also contain standard provisions requiring grantees provide a web posting of their final report, prepare a project fact sheet, and make a presentation to the Board or at an event hosted by Valley Water when the project is completed and upon request.

Additionally, grantees will be required to report project data, such as demographics of participants and measurable outcomes of all activities that involve community engagement, education, or outreach for staff to assess impacts of the grant funding.

Other provisions may include clear success measures, adherence to the project schedule, and guidelines regarding when contract revisions are necessary for changes in the project scope, schedule, and budget.

**Pilot A2 Water Conservation Mini-Grant Program**

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On February 11, 2020, the Board approved the development of a Pilot Water Conservation (Priority A2) Mini-Grant Program. The pilot mini-grant program designated a total amount not-to-exceed \$100,000 for projects that meet A2 criteria to allow grantees to kick-start projects and gain data to support an application for future funding opportunities. Mini-grant applications were accepted on a rolling basis through December 31, 2020. Twelve (12) applications for a total funding request of \$57,885 were submitted and are currently being reviewed in accordance with the existing D3 Mini-Grant Program award process approved by the Board on March 14, 2017. Once a mini-grant application is approved for funding, an agreement will be executed by the parties.

If all of the A2 mini-grant applications are approved for funding, the total grant amount awarded under Priority A2 will reach the maximum set by the Key Performance Indicator #1: Award up to \$1 million to test new conservation activities. This project status update will be reported to the Safe, Clean Water Program Independent Monitoring Committee as part of their FY21 annual report review process.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

Financial impact associated with this item is limited to the proposals approved for funding per Board action.

The A2 Water Conservation pilot mini-grant program in the total amount of up to \$100,000 is funded in the FY21 budget under project 26061008.

The four eligible B7 Cleanups and Education grants in the total amount of \$188,558 is funded in the FY21 budget under project 00061019.

The one D3 Access to Trails and Open Space grant in the total amount of \$25,530 is funded in the FY21 budget under project 26061007.

**CEQA:**

The recommended action does not constitute a project under CEQA (per CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(a)) because it does not commit the Valley Water to a definite course of action, and therefore has no potential to result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect environmental impact. Specifically, it is a government fiscal activity which is not a project because it does not involve commitment to any specific project that may result in a potentially significant environmental impact, per CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(b)(4).

The Board action is approval of staff recommendations to fund projects following project-specific CEQA compliance, if required, and is not a commitment to fund those projects. It does not foreclose Valley Water's exercise of discretion with respect to a project, including but not limited to considering other feasible alternatives or mitigation measures to avoid or minimize a project's impacts, requiring a grantee to make such modifications deemed necessary to reduce a project's impacts, or determining not to proceed with one or more components of a project.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment 1: Evaluation Criteria

Attachment 2: Scoring Matrix

**UNCLASSIFIED MANAGER:**

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