



**SAFE
CLEAN
WATER
PROGRAM**

Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Regional Program Stormwater Investment Plan Programming Guidelines

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Introduction

The Stormwater Investment Plan (SIP) is a five- (5-) year plan developed annually by each Watershed Area Steering Committee (WASC) that recommends funding allocations for Projects, Project Concepts, and Scientific Studies in the Regional Program's Infrastructure Program (IP), Technical Resources Program (TRP), and Scientific Studies Program (SSP).

The Safe, Clean Water Program (SCWP), under the authority of the Los Angeles County Flood Control District and administered by the Los Angeles County Public Works (Public Works), shall be implemented consistent with the programmatic Goals as outlined in Section 18.04 of the Safe, Clean Water Program Implementation Ordinance. These guidelines were developed to interpret the codified language and to aid WASCs in the review and recommendation of eligible Projects, Project Concepts, and Scientific Studies that are consistent with SCWP Goals, sub-program objectives, and the Initial Watershed Plans..

For the current SIP programming cycle (recommending funding for Fiscal Year 2026-2027), the following guidelines are intended to assist SCWP governance committees in strategically carrying out their roles and responsibilities. Public Works intends to continue implementing other adaptative management practices in parallel with ongoing engagement with the governance committees.

Applications to the Infrastructure Program, Technical Resources Program, and Scientific Studies Program are received and reviewed by Public Works, as the administrator of the SCWP, to determine completeness and verify eligibility after the Call for Projects deadline. This review ensures that all necessary information is provided in the application and it is consistent with Chapters 16 and 18 of the Ordinance to ensure WASCs focus their time considering applications that meet all criteria for each sub-program.

The information presented in these guidelines is a sweeping compilation of existing guidance and data provided to reinforce the importance of strategic prioritization and long-term planning for the SCWP. Guidance to date has emphasized the importance of planning beyond the 5-year SIP cycle and prioritizing the limited SCWP Regional Program funding based on all available data and resources shared and discussed within each SIP programming cycle. The Initial Watershed Plans build on this foundation by helping WASCs make more informed decisions on strategic investments now and into the future. The Plans will be used to assess Projects and Programs, ensure Projects and Programs contribute to SCW Program Goals, and assess progress toward SCW Program Goals.

Financial analysis shows the ***potential*** costs to fund all future phases of the Projects and/or Project Concepts already included in past SIPs – if SCWP remains the only funding source –

may exceed total available funding from the SCWP Regional Program over a 10 year period. WASCs – especially those that have prioritized numerous design-only funding proposals in past SIPs – will need to determine which SIP-programmed Projects can proceed to construction and/or operations and maintenance (O&M) phases using SCWP Regional Program funds, and Projects that will need to rely on leveraged funds or be deferred, modified, or halted. Additionally, Projects should continue to be carefully evaluated to ensure sufficient leveraged funds are secured to bring each Project to completion and sustain the Project's O&M throughout the Project's useful life. If sufficient funding is not accounted for, projects should be deferred until additional leveraged funding is committed to ensure completion of all activities such that benefits claimed are fully realized. The monetary caps recommended in the following guidelines aim to help ensure capacity for proper consideration of both new Projects, Project Concepts, and Scientific Studies in the future, and future phases of certain existing Projects and/or Project Concepts.

These guidelines reiterate the of securing leveraged funding to supplement SCW Regional Program funds . SCWP governance committees will recall that guidance to date has stressed the importance of long-term planning and strategic prioritization of the limited SCW Regional Program funding based on all available data from past SIPs, progress and expenditure reports, potential future costs to fund all phases of Projects and/or Project Concepts, new requests via the project module, and other resources available in each cycle.

Complying with the SIP Criteria

SIPs shall be developed by the WASC in accordance with the criteria described in Section 18.07.B.2 of the Ordinance, below. Additional guidance in complying with the SIP criteria is provided in [blue](#):

- a. Not less than eighty-five percent (85%) of the budget shall be allocated to Infrastructure Program activities, not more than ten (10%) of the budget shall be allocated to Technical Resources Program activities, and not more than five percent (5%) of the budget shall be allocated to Scientific Studies Program activities;
 - Percent allocations will be evaluated annually over a rolling 5-year period. The criteria for Infrastructure Program activities will be calculated based on the total funding **allocated** over the 5-year period. The criteria for Technical Resources Program activities and Scientific Studies Program activities will be calculated based on the total **revenue** generated by the Watershed Area over the 5-year period.
 - Additionally, not more than 20% of the total funding allocated shall be allocated to Design only Infrastructure Program Activities.
- b. Projects that assist in achieving compliance with a MS4 Permit shall be prioritized, to the extent feasible;
- c. Funding for Projects that provide DAC Benefits shall not be less than one hundred and ten percent (110%) of the ratio of the DAC population to the total population in each Watershed Area. To facilitate compliance with this requirement, the District [Public Works] will work with stakeholders and Watershed Coordinator(s) to utilize existing tools to identify high-priority geographies for water-quality improvement projects and other projects that create DAC Benefits within DACs, to help inform WASCs as they consider project recommendations;
 - WASCs can determine DAC Benefits on a project-by-project basis.
 - Refer to the [SCWP Interim \(Program\) Guidelines](#) for additional information regarding benefits to Disadvantaged Communities.
- d. Each Municipality shall receive benefits in proportion to the funds generated within their jurisdiction, after accounting for allocation of the one hundred ten percent (110%) return to DACs, to the extent feasible, to be evaluated annually over a rolling five (5) year period;

- e. A spectrum of Project types and sizes shall be implemented throughout the region, to the extent feasible, to be evaluated annually over a rolling five (5) year period;
- f. Nature-Based Solutions shall be prioritized, to the extent feasible;
 - Refer to the [SCWP Interim \(Program\) Guidelines](#) for additional information regarding Nature-Based Solutions.
- g. Projects, Feasibility Studies, scientific and technical studies, and other activities selected for inclusion in a SIP should be recommended to receive funding for their total estimated costs, unless a lesser amount has been requested;
 - If a lesser amount is requested (e.g., a Project is requesting funds for design phase only), the Developer must remain committed to securing additional funding sources to ensure completion of all activities proposed in the application and submitted Feasibility Study such that benefits claimed are fully realized.
 - “Total estimated costs” should include long-term O&M costs and appropriate contingency allowances for inflation and potential cost overruns.
 - Note that funding included in the SIP for TRP Project Concepts only includes the amount for investigating the feasibility of the Project Concept and potentially for Feasibility Study development and completion. Funding for a TRP Project Concept does not include the full lifecycle costs; WASCs should therefore consider the longer-term *forecasted* design, construction, and O&M costs for TRP Project Concepts.
 - Each SIP in aggregate should include not less than 25% leveraged funding in alignment with the recommendations in the [SCWP Regional Oversight Committee’s 2026 Biennial Progress Report](#) (anticipated to be finalized in March 2026).
 - Funding Assessments are provided for each eligible Project application to strengthen the identification of leverage funding sources and support WASCs in funding priorities per these guidelines and partial funding decisions per the [Partial Funding Guidelines](#).
- h. Operation and maintenance costs for any Project may be included in the Infrastructure Program portion of a SIP, whether or not the design and construction of that Project was included in a SIP; and
 - Funding requested beyond 5 fiscal years of the request (i.e., requesting funding for the sixth fiscal year) should only be used for extended planning, design, and/or construction.
 - Future O&M requests should be submitted as separate funding requests in 5-year increments. Approval of O&M funding does not guarantee continued funding beyond the approved SIP’s 5-year period. O&M funding is subject to WASC review, prioritization, and the availability of funds.

- i. Only Projects that meet or exceed the Threshold Score shall be eligible for inclusion in the Infrastructure Program. Projects that receive a score below the Threshold Score may be referred to the Technical Resources Program at the discretion of the Watershed Area Steering Committee.

Under extenuating circumstances where the SIP criteria cannot be met, an exception may be permitted and disclosed in the SIP. For example, if very few IP Projects were submitted such that it significantly reduces the allocation for Projects to less than 85% of the total funding allocated, an exception could be made as long as the allocations for TRP Project Concepts and SSP Scientific Studies do not exceed 10% and 5% of revenue generated by the Watershed Area can be allocated towards TRP and SSP, respectively.

Setting a Monetary Cap

The purpose of the SIP is to capture recommended programming for the upcoming fiscal year (to be approved by the Board) as well as anticipated recommendations for the next four subsequent years. The SIP projection for the subsequent four years should remain fluid/open for revisions because:

- a. The actual amount of available revenue for subsequent years is unknown and subject to change each year due to exemptions, credits, and appeals;
- b. Other Projects or Project Concepts may become available that were not ready for consideration in prior years, including Projects that have advanced through the TRP and may apply for IP funding in upcoming years (i.e. long-term capital costs of approved TRP Project Concepts are unknown until completion of each Feasibility Study and are therefore not earmarked in the 5-year SIP planning window);
- c. Economic fluctuations may escalate estimated costs; and
- d. Contingencies for programmed projects may be required and/or changed.

Additionally, governance committees should consider the longer-term financial viability of the SIP beyond the 5-year period to ensure that SCWP Regional Program funding and leveraged funding is available to support construction and O&M activities projected beyond the 5-year period.

To allow for inflation and cost overruns, the WASCs shall limit recommended programming in the four subsequent years to no more than 80% of available funds, consistent with the recommendations in the [SCWP Regional Oversight Committee's 2026 Biennial Progress Report](#) (anticipated to be finalized in March 2026).

The online [SIP Programming Tool](#) is available and updated to support decision-making by the WASCs.

Technical Resources Program

A flat rate of up to \$400,000 shall be allocated for investigating the feasibility of the Project Concept funded through the Technical Resources Program in an approved SIP and potentially for Feasibility Study development and completion. This flat rate has been adjusted from \$300,000 to address inflation/escalation and provides additional capacity to conduct more detailed engineering analysis, provide additional outreach and engagement and provide a description of alignment with the applicable Watershed Area's watershed plan. To support benefits claimed based on current Scoring Committee practices, engineering analysis may include, but is not limited to, site-specific geotechnical analysis, analysis of supply and demand impacts of the project, sewer capacity studies, and other analysis needed to support benefits claimed, as appropriate.

The WASCs will have the discretion to allocate a lesser amount, in consultation with Public Works, based on Watershed Area funding availability, status of the Project Concept, and appropriate level of engineering analysis. If less funding is needed to complete the Feasibility Study, the excess funds will be returned to the Watershed Area Steering Committees for future SIP budgeting. If additional funds are needed, Public Works, at their discretion, may use SCWP District Program funds to supplement the need.

Public Works will assemble a Technical Assistance Team (TAT) to oversee progression of the Feasibility Study. The TAT will be led by a technical consultant assigned by Public Works and will consist of the project proponent, SCWP staff, Watershed Coordinator(s), and other interested parties. Participation by the project proponent will be at their own expense; funding is not provided to applicants for their participation. Public Works will assign the technical consultant lead at their discretion. Once a completed Feasibility Study is produced by the TAT, the project proponent can use it to apply to the Infrastructure Program to request funding for the partial or full cost to implement the Project, which may include planning, design, construction, and operation and maintenance, depending on the level of design completion.

When recommending Projects for TRP funding, WASCs should also consider:

- Alignment with the [SCW Initial Watershed Plans](#), including the location and potential benefits of the Project in the context of the watershed, community, and existing/planned Projects (e.g., whether the Project is located in an area not currently managed by Regional and Municipal Program Projects), and
- Long-term planning, design, construction, and O&M costs.

Scientific Studies Program

Each complete and eligible Scientific Studies Program application is peer reviewed by a panel of subject matter experts in hydrology, water quality, modeling, microbiology, and civil engineering. These reviews are then synthesized into a summary that is shared with the WASC, who should consider these summaries in totality with their Watershed Area-specific needs and the [SCW Initial Watershed Plans](#) to guide decision-making.

When deliberating which Scientific Studies to include in their recommended SIP, each WASC should consider any monetary caps previously decided, available funding, and the 5% budgetary limit over a rolling 5-year period as outlined in the Ordinance and further expanded in [Complying with the SIP Criteria](#) above. The WASC can request applicants to reduce funding requests to fit within the recommended SIP through the [Partial Funding Guidelines](#), though it is important to note that the applicant must agree to the change and be able to deliver the full scope as outlined in the application with no reduction to the proposed benefits.

When recommending Scientific Studies for funding, WASCs should consider:

- Existing efforts, both complete and in-progress, to ensure meaningful efforts are considered,
 - For details, refer to the [SCW Program Portal](#) and the first [Annual Science Symposium](#), held in November 2025
- Alignment with the gaps and Scientific Study needs identified in the [SCW Initial Watershed Plans](#),
- Monetary caps established, available annual and 5-year budget, and the 5% budgetary limit over a rolling 5-year period.

Scientific Studies Program applications that span multiple Watershed Areas will be considered and voted on separately by each applicable WASC. Typically, approved Scientific Studies will be scoped and implemented to apply to, or provide benefits within, only the Watershed Areas where approved in the SIP. The Study proponent shall clearly identify and confirm the implications of partial approval, including how the study scope, outcomes, and benefits would be adjusted if the application is not approved by all requested WASCs.

Alternatively, proponents of regionally significant Scientific Studies that span multiple Watershed Areas may explore partnership opportunities with Public Works. Scientific Study proponents that are interested in partnering with Public Works are encouraged to engage with Public Works and their Watershed Coordinator as early as possible. Public Works can be reached at SafeCleanWaterLA@pw.lacounty.gov and Watershed Coordinator contact information can be found on the [Safe, Clean Water Program website](#) for the respective Watershed area. Partnership opportunities with Public Works will be considered on a case-by-

case basis and evaluated based on SCWP Goals, funding needs, regional benefits, and the District Program's available budget.

Moving forward, a Scientific Advisory Panel will be created to guide future research topics in alignment with SCWP priorities to inform Scientific Study development and support future WASC decision making.

Evaluating Project Modifications

Proposed modifications to a Project, Project Concept, or Study shall be disclosed in a Project Modification Request (PMR) form and evaluated in accordance with the [Project Modification Guidelines](#). WASCs should encourage Developers who are submitting PMRs for additional funding to maximize leveraged funding. To maximize the value of past investments in Regional Program Projects and Scientific Studies and to expedite implementation, Public Works recommends WASCs consider project phase when prioritizing PMRs; for example, Projects requesting additional construction funding could be prioritized over Projects requesting additional design funding. WASCs may consider withdrawing future funding for Projects whose PMRs will result in a significant reduction in benefits compared to the original scope of work, or in cases where alternative Projects may deliver similar or greater benefits more expediently or cost effectively. Any unspent and/or undisbursed funds from Projects or Scientific Studies discontinued from a SIP will be returned to the respective WASC for reprogramming in a future SIP. Projects and Scientific Studies in default of the terms of the Regional Program Transfer Agreement may also need to return funds from ineligible expenditures subject to the discretion of Public Works. WASCs are highly encouraged to utilize the [SCW Initial Watershed Plans](#) to support prioritization and strategic decision making.

Redistributing Annual Funding Allocations

During SIP development and programming, the WASCs are authorized to recommend a re-distribution of funding for new and continuing Projects and Scientific Studies—without changing the total funding request (unless requested in a PMR)—if the applicant or Developer demonstrates to the WASC's satisfaction that they are willing and able to complete the full project or study scope identified in the application with the re-distributed SCWP funding. This can be an essential step of SIP development to maximize SIP funding capacity, prioritize

Projects and Scientific Studies, and ensure Projects and Scientific Studies are receiving funds in alignment with their anticipated schedule. When redistributing funding allocations to future years, WASCs should consider the potential for cost escalation due to inflation, and should consider maintaining appropriate monetary reserves to accommodate future funding requests (see [Setting a Monetary Cap](#)).

Prioritizing Funding Allocations

To ensure anticipated benefits can be fully realized, Public Works continues to urge the WASCs to prioritize funding allocations for Projects and Scientific Studies that are in their final stages of implementation.

Appropriate actions to consider for lower priority Projects and Scientific Studies may include, but are not limited to:

- Deferring funding to later years, if appropriate (see [Redistributing Annual Funding Allocations](#)). Deferral could be based on:
 - Strategic need to advance a different Project or Scientific Study that better aligns with the [SCW Initial Watershed Plans](#) and/or has more leveraged funding committed.
 - Opportunity to enhance overall benefits to the Project or Scientific Study for resubmission in future years.
- Funding only a portion of the additional funding request, if appropriate (see [Evaluating Project Modifications](#)).
- Encouraging or requiring Developers to pursue other cost-sharing funding such as grants or committing additional matching funds.