



**SAFE
CLEAN
WATER
PROGRAM**

Interim Scientific Studies Program Guidelines

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Interim Scientific Studies Program Guidelines

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Acronyms & Abbreviations List

BMP	Best Management Practice
Ordinance	The Los Angeles Region Safe, Clean Water Program & the Safe, Clean Water Program Implementation Ordinances (Chapters 16 and 18) of the Los Angeles County Flood Control District Code
Public Works	Los Angeles County Public Works
QA/QC	Quality Assurance & Quality Control
SCW	Safe, Clean Water
SCW Program	Safe, Clean Water Program
SIP	Stormwater Investment Plan
SSP	Scientific Studies Program
SSP Applicants	Applicants who submit a Scientific Study to the Scientific Studies Program
SSP Application	Applications meeting the criteria outlined in Section 18.07.E of the Ordinance
SSP Guidelines	Interim Scientific Studies Program Guidelines
Scientific Study/Studies	Scientific activities such as scientific studies, technical studies, monitoring, and modeling meeting the criteria outlined in Section 18.07.E of the Ordinance
WASC	Watershed Area Steering Committee

Background & Purpose

The Safe, Clean Water (SCW) Program Scientific Studies Program (SSP), under the authority of the Los Angeles County Flood Control District and administered by Los Angeles County Public Works (Public Works), shall be implemented consistent with Sections 16.02, 16.05.D.3, and 18.07.E of the Ordinance.

The Ordinance establishes the SSP and sets requirements for implementation as part of the Regional Program. The SCW Regional Program annually receives fifty percent (50%) of the funding from the SCW Program, of which no more than five percent (5%) shall be allocated to the SSP to fund scientific and technical studies, modeling, and monitoring that accomplishes these objectives:

- Increase Stormwater and Urban Runoff capture
- Reduce Stormwater and Urban Runoff pollution

The purpose of the SSP is to support scientifically rigorous, technically sound, data-driven research and studies that advance the state-of-the-science and inform SCW Program strategies, funding, planning, and decision-making. Through the SCW Regional Program, funding is provided for Scientific Studies that strengthen Project effectiveness; encourage innovation and adoption of new technologies and practices; and generate scientific insights that are regionally relevant and actionable for the SCW Program.

SSP Applicants should develop strategic and robust Scientific Studies that align with the needs and opportunities identified in the existing Watershed Plans or by the Scientific Advisory Panel, as applicable. The [Watershed Planning Initiative](#) facilitates strategic planning by integrating community and SCW Program governance committee feedback, leveraging information from existing efforts, and identifying opportunities for impactful multi-benefit projects. This helps the SCW Program make more informed decisions, reduces redundancies, and enhances accountability across the region.

The following Interim Scientific Studies Program Guidelines (SSP Guidelines) are intended to support applicants, proponents, and governance committees by providing clarity and consistency on eligibility, application requirements, and expand on definitions and procedures described in the Ordinance as they apply to the SSP.

These SSP Guidelines may be updated in the future as the SCW Program is adaptively managed.

Definitions

The definitions set forth in Sections 16.03 and 18.02 of the Ordinance shall apply to these SSP Guidelines.

16.02 – Purpose

This ordinance is adopted to achieve the following purposes and directs that the provisions hereof be interpreted in order to:

- B. Provide funding for Programs and Projects to increase Stormwater and Urban Runoff capture and reduce Stormwater and Urban Runoff pollution in the District, including Projects and Programs providing a Water Supply Benefit, Water Quality Benefit, and Community Investment Benefit.

16.05.D.3 – Scientific Studies Program

This program shall provide funding for eligible scientific and other activities, such as, but not limited to: scientific studies, technical studies, monitoring, modeling, and other similar activities. The District will administer this program and will seek to utilize independent research institutions or academic institutions to carry out or help design and peer review activities carried out by other entities. All activities implemented through this program shall be conducted in accordance with accepted scientific protocols.

18.07.E – Scientific Studies Program Implementation

1. The purpose of the Scientific Studies Program is to provide funding for scientific and technical activities, including, but not limited to, scientific studies, technical studies, monitoring, and modeling related to Stormwater and Urban Runoff capture and pollution reduction.
2. Watershed Area Steering Committees will recommend studies and other activities for funding by including the studies or other activities in the Scientific Studies Program portion of their respective Stormwater Investment Plans (SIPs).
3. All studies and other activities included in the Scientific Studies Program portion of a SIP shall be conducted in accordance with accepted scientific protocols.
4. The Scientific Studies Program shall be administered by the District and, to the extent feasible, shall utilize independent research institutions or academic

institutions to carry out Scientific Studies or to help design and peer review Scientific Studies carried out by other entities.

For these SSP Guidelines, the term “SSP Application” denotes applications meeting the criteria outlined in Section 18.07.E.1 of the Ordinance. This document further defines the following relating to the Ordinance:

Accepted Scientific Protocol: A detailed, structured, and methodical process that allows for reproducible results and thoroughly documents its problem statement, study questions, objectives, methods, data collection, data validation steps, analysis, findings, and conclusions – specifically demonstrating a clear, direct, measurable connection to an increase in Stormwater and Urban Runoff Capture and/or pollution reduction. It must also include objective measures to verify accuracy and reliability by comparing results against established benchmarks, historical records, or independent datasets.

Scientific Studies: Comprehensive scientific research that substantially includes most or all of the following: experimental design, field monitoring, laboratory analysis, statistical evaluation, modeling, or analytical tool development. A Scientific Study shall substantially investigate, generate, and/or evaluate knowledge to improve understanding of regional or Watershed Area-specific conditions, processes, or needs related to increasing Stormwater and Urban Runoff capture and/or reducing Stormwater and Urban Runoff pollution. Studies shall produce scientific findings, conclusions, and recommendations to inform SCW Program implementation, prioritization, or policy decisions, and be conducted using accepted scientific protocols.

Technical Studies: Structured investigations designed to directly evaluate, assess, and/or optimize the design, implementation, or performance of Best Management Practices (BMPs) to improve understanding of regional or Watershed Area-specific conditions, processes, or needs, and to support SCW Program planning and decision-making related to increasing Stormwater and Urban Runoff capture and/or reducing Stormwater and Urban Runoff pollution. Technical studies shall use measurable BMP performance data, field monitoring, modeling, or other quantitative technical analysis. Studies shall produce actionable technical findings for the SCW Program, including technical conclusions and recommendations, and be conducted using accepted scientific protocols.

Accepted Scientific Protocols

Section 18.07.E.3 requires that all studies and other activities included in the SSP portion of a SIP be conducted in accordance with accepted scientific protocols.

For the purpose of the SCW Program, accepted scientific protocols are defined as structured and methodical approaches that yield reproducible results and clearly document Scientific Study problem statement, study questions, objectives, methodology, data collection procedures, data validation steps, analytical methods, findings, and conclusions, including comparison against established benchmarks, historical data, or independent datasets to ensure accuracy and reliability. Protocols must also demonstrate a clear, direct, and measurable connection to an increase in Stormwater and Urban Runoff capture and/or pollution reduction.

Scientific Studies that utilize sound scientific protocols in an exemplary fashion and/or provide significant findings may be prioritized to present at future Science Symposiums.

Requirements for SSP Applications

The application for funding consideration of Scientific Studies shall be developed in accordance with [Accepted Scientific Protocols](#) and include documentation supporting claimed benefits, aligned with Section 18.07.E.1 of the Ordinance. The following are requirements for SSP Applications to be deemed eligible and complete:

Details

- **Problem Statement** identifying gap in existing stormwater knowledge
- **Study Questions** that aim to address the gap in existing stormwater knowledge
- **Objectives** elaborating on the Scientific Study's intent to use study questions to investigate the problem statement
- **Methodology** of the Scientific Study, including but not limited to:
 - **Criteria for Data Collection** outlining how and under what conditions data will be gathered to ensure valid, reliable, and reproducible Scientific Study results that directly characterize Stormwater or Urban Runoff conditions, processes or phenomena relevant to the study's objectives
 - **Criteria for Data Validation** to confirm data accuracy, consistency, and reliability through QA/QC checks and comparison to established benchmarks, historical datasets, or independent measurements
 - **Baseline Conditions** establishing existing Stormwater or Urban Runoff parameters to create a point of comparison for evaluating Scientific Study findings
 - **Documentation Procedures** describing how records are maintained to ensure reproducibility and accountability of Scientific Study outcomes

Big Picture

- **Nexus** providing a clear, direct, and measurable connection between the proposed Scientific Study and increasing Stormwater and Urban Runoff capture and/or reducing pollution, as well as how the study may advance knowledge, inform SCW Program implementation and prioritization, or inform policy decisions
- **Expected Outcomes & Results Analysis** describing expected (and desired) outcomes, including use cases, target audience, and resulting guidance along with how findings will be compared against baseline conditions, benchmarks, or other reference datasets
- **Engagement & Dissemination Plan** outlining interactions with proponents, municipalities, and the community and describing how the Scientific Study's information, results, and findings will be shared with the public, including on the SCW Program Website
- **Alignment** addressing the needs and opportunities identified by the Watershed Plans, the Scientific Advisory Panel, and/or by a Watershed Area Steering Committee (WASC)'s preceding SIP transmittal recommendations

Background

- **Previous Research** to summarize existing studies or data that inform, support, or strengthen the current analysis
- **Regulations** (*if applicable*) that identify any relevant regulatory requirements or standards that influence the Scientific Study's approach, methodology, and/or compliance needs
- **Study Team Qualifications** describing relevant expertise and qualifications in the proposed Scientific Study's topic or area of focus

Cost & Schedule

- **Cost & Schedule** of the entire Scientific Study, not just SCW Program funding request
- **Cost Share** including any in-progress, committed, and/or received funds from other partnerships
- **Funding Request** breakdown per SCW Program Watershed Area and fiscal year

Additional Information

- **Additional Information** to provide any supporting details to demonstrate scientific and/or technical rigor, clarify assumptions, or provide additional context

Eligibility & Completeness

SSP Applications are submitted to and reviewed by SCW Program administration staff to determine both completeness and eligibility after the Call for Projects deadline, which is typically July 31 for the following SIP cycle. These checks verify that all required information is provided in the SSP Application and is consistent with Sections 16.05.D.3 and 18.07.E of the Ordinance to ensure the WASCs only receive applications meeting all eligibility requirements. This allows the WASCs to focus their time and efforts on SSP Applications that meet all criteria.

SSP Applications are reviewed in accordance with these Guidelines to confirm administrative completeness, evaluate scientific and/or technical rigor including the use of accepted scientific protocol, and assess overall SSP eligibility. This review ensures that each application aligns with the Ordinance and SSP objectives of increasing Stormwater and Urban Runoff capture and pollution reduction.

Eligibility refers to whether the SSP Application meets the fundamental criteria of the SCW SSP, including alignment with Program objectives, adherence to required components, and demonstration of scientific and/or technical rigor. An SSP Application deemed ineligible will not proceed through the SCW Regional Program for funding consideration. Examples of ineligibility include, but are not limited to:

- Anticipated findings that do not have a demonstrable and measurable connection to a future increase in Stormwater and Urban Runoff Capture and/or reduce pollution
- Scientific Studies that do not follow accepted scientific protocols (further expanded in the [Accepted Scientific Protocols](#) section)
- Lack of scientific and/or technical rigor
- Lack of scientific evaluation
- Activities that do not meet the definitions of scientific or technical studies as it relates to the SSP, these Guidelines, and the Ordinance

A lack of scientific and/or technical rigor occurs when a Scientific Study's design, methods, or documentation do not meet the criteria required to establish reliable, reproducible, and well-supported findings. Similarly, a lack of scientific evaluation reflects the absence of a structured and defensible approach for assessing and interpreting the data. Together, these deficiencies undermine the validity of the submission and limit its ability to contribute meaningful information to stormwater-related decision-making within the SCW Program.

Completeness refers to the extent to which an SSP Application contains the required information, documentation, and responses necessary for Public Works to conduct an initial review. Examples of incompleteness include, but are not limited to:

- Discrepancies in funding request amounts, cost share, or total cost within supporting documents
- Unclear, vague, or omitted administrative information such as location, schedule, Scientific Study lead(s), etc.
- Incomplete sections within the application or missing supporting documentation

Applicants with SSP Applications deemed ineligible will be notified via email.

Partial Funding & SIP Inclusion

Scientific Study proponents may focus on a targeted goal within a specific SCW Program Watershed Area or apply to the broader Los Angeles County region, and as such may apply to one or multiple Watershed Areas. WASCs may independently decide whether to fund a SSP Application at their discretion. In such case, applicants must ensure that the scope of the Scientific Study remains unchanged for those WASCs that include the SSP Application in their recommended SIP. WASCs may also consider reduced funding in accordance with the [Partial Funding Guidelines](#), to which the applicant must concur that the same benefits can be achieved without a change or reduction of scope. In both cases, proposed SSP Applications cannot be modified or changed to compensate for reduced funding or lack of inclusion in SIPs.

As Watershed Plans are released, future adaptive watershed planning efforts will identify planning gaps and refine priorities through engagement, data collection, updated guidance, and Scientific Studies that support long-term regional planning. More information on Watershed Planning, including the Initial Watershed Plans, is available on the [Watershed Planning Initiative](#) webpage.

SCW District Program – Regional Scientific Study Partnerships

SSP Application proponents that are interested in partnering with the SCW District Program to implement Regional Scientific Studies are encouraged to begin engaging with Public Works and the relevant Watershed Coordinators as early as possible to explore potential partnerships. 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 Watershed Areas' priorities, funding needs, regional benefits, and the District Program's available budget.