

SAFE CLEAN WATER PROGRAM SCIENTIFIC STUDY PROPOSAL QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Proposal identification information and summary of the project goals.

Title: **LAUSD Living Schoolyards Program Pilot Study**

Proposing Organization: **TreePeople**

Your summary of the Project Goals and Objectives:

One reviewer did not provide a summary of the project's goals and objectives. The other two reviewers agree that the study's overall goal is to help the L.A. Unified School District identify suitable, multi-benefit stormwater management retrofits for its campuses. Specifically, the project will develop a pilot program at 10 of the District's campuses, in which infrastructure options will be developed that not only help the District meet its stormwater management goals, but that also will pave the way for nature-based solutions that students can engage in and help implement. The project's final product is a comprehensive set of blueprints for implementing a set of multi-benefit solutions at the 10 pilot campuses that are deemed to be the strongest projects.

2. Are the objectives clearly stated? What portion of the objectives need more clarification?

The reviewers agree that the study objectives are generally clear. Two of the reviewers caveated their positive assessment with critiques: One noted that some objectives (in particular, Objectives 2, 5, and 6) are "very open-ended and may be difficult to quantify." The other reviewer noted that they "expected" to find an objective relating to scaling up the pilot program across the school district.

3. How do the project goals directly support a nexus to increasing stormwater or urban runoff capture and/or reducing stormwater or urban runoff pollution?

All three reviewers agree that the project has the potential to effectively support the SCWP's goals of increasing stormwater or urban runoff capture and/or reducing stormwater or urban runoff pollution. The reviewers all offered positive comments. One reviewer noted that the project should result in an increase in infiltration. The second and third reviewers cumulatively noted that the campus retrofits have the potential to be cost-effective because the land is already publicly owned, and also have the potential to provide important co-benefits, including educating students about stormwater and promoting students to adopt stormwater capture at home.

4. What is (are) the overarching technical approach element(s) of the proposed project as you understand them (not necessarily the same as the elements described in the proposal)?

The reviewers agree that the study's technical approach consists of using existing planning tools and existing similar projects to develop optimized, multi-benefit stormwater retrofit projects for 10 of the District's campuses. Specifically, the proposing organization will determine how the pilot program aligns with and complements existing stormwater/green planning efforts, including studying the site-specific (i.e., geotechnical, hydrological, and social) issues at the 10 campuses. Then, the proposing organization will develop optimized

projects for each site in consultation with stakeholders. Finally, the project will develop a comprehensive set of blueprints that outline which pilot projects should be implemented.

5. Has the proposal provided sufficient information to describe the technical approach for each element? If not, what information is missing?

All three reviewers stated there was generally sufficient information in the proposal to understand how all of the technical elements would be implemented. While one reviewer said they don't believe there are any "gaps or missing information," the other two reviewers offered mild critiques. One reviewer said they were "a bit concerned" that the pilot program may not be able to achieve all of its objectives because the program will not actually build any of the proposed pilot projects. Providing more details about what would go in the conceptual plans, including a list of the most important design factors they would be considering, would have been helpful. The other reviewer said that the proposing organization should have provided more documentation on the "globally replicated, community-based model" that the proposing organization will use to develop its pilot projects.

6. Is the technical approach sound? If not, what do you recommend should be done to improve the technical approach of the proposed project?

The reviewers all agree that the project's approach is technically sound. Two of the reviewers provided comments elaborating on their assessment. One reviewer said that Phase 1 might be "a bit overdone" because some of the documents that need to be compiled already exist. The second reviewer commended the project for working to determine "the most appropriate projects which would provide the most benefits while ensuring safety of students and staff."

7. How achievable are the study's stated technical objectives, especially within the proposed timeframe and budget?

The reviewers agree that it is feasible for the proposing organization to achieve all of the study's objectives in the stated timeframe, but the reviewers are less sure about the project's budget. All three reviewers offered comments on the budget. One reviewer said they "assume" the budget is sufficient. A second reviewer said the budget is "quite high," considering that the outcomes "are only conceptual plans." They were hoping that the budget and timeline would have been extended to include construction of the BMPs. The third reviewer said the proposal's lack of a budget breakdown makes the budget difficult to assess.

8. What are the greatest technical risks that you foresee the proposing agency facing when implementing the project?

The reviewers agree this project faces technical risks that center around the feasibility of building the final set of pilot projects that the program will recommend be built. One reviewer said the pilot projects could face stakeholder resistance if the projects are "not feasible or too expensive." A second reviewer said the pilot projects could be derailed by "contaminated soils or underground utilities" at the campuses. The third reviewer said the most beneficial projects could be deemed "unsafe for students and staff," although this reviewer said this was likely a

non-issue because “many types of stormwater projects are safely implemented in public spaces.” Regardless, continued positive relationships with LAUSD will be crucially important.

9. Are there clear linkages between the project’s technical objectives and the types of decisions that stormwater managers will make based on the project’s outcomes? Will the technical achievements provide stormwater managers useful linkages that extend beyond this study?

The three reviewers disagree on whether the project has clear linkages to management that could be applicable beyond the project. Two reviewers offered unequivocal praise, with one reviewer noting that the project will provide “critical information” to the District. The third reviewer said they are “not too certain”, noting that the proposal’s lack of clarity about which BMPs might be implemented could limit the project’s impact on the science of stormwater management. The third reviewer said one potential outcome is that the project could positively influence how families of students prioritize stormwater management at home.

10. Please provide any additional technical perspectives you would like to share.

One reviewer characterized the proposal as “excellent” overall. A second reviewer noted that the stakeholder engagement outlined in the proposal is “a valuable part” of the project. The third reviewer said the campuses “could be strong candidates for cost-effective retrofits.”

11. Please answer each of the following questions by selecting one of the following five answer choices: Excellent, Very good, Adequate, Inadequate or Not applicable because of insufficient information. Feel free to add an explanation to accompany your answer choice:

- a. How well do the proposal objectives address the SCWP’s goals of increasing stormwater or urban runoff capture and/or reducing stormwater or urban runoff pollution?

The reviewers each provided a different rating regarding the strength of the project’s connections to SCWP goals. One reviewer gave an “adequate” rating, a second reviewer gave an “excellent” rating, and the third reviewer gave a “very good” rating. The third reviewer noted that the study does not elevate to “excellent” because none of the pilot projects identified through the program will be implemented during the study.

- b. How well do you think the technical approaches will achieve the study objectives and stated outcomes?

The reviewers each provided a different rating regarding the study’s ability to achieve its goals. The ratings were “adequate,” “very good, and “excellent,” and none of the reviewers elaborated on their ratings.

- c. Technical experience and qualifications of the study team?

The reviewers disagree in their assessment of the qualifications of the study team. Two reviewers gave “very good” and “excellent” ratings, while the third reviewer gave a “not applicable” rating due to “insufficient information.”