

SAFE CLEAN WATER PROGRAM SCIENTIFIC STUDY PROPOSAL QUESTIONNAIRE

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

Title: **Maximizing Impact of Minimum Control Measures**

Proposing Organization: **San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments**

Your summary of the Project Goals and Objectives:

The reviewers agree that the project's overarching goal is to develop standardized methods for quantifying the effectiveness of non-structural BMPs (a.k.a. minimum control measures, or MCMs) and then for optimally integrating these MCMs into watershed management strategies in the L.A. region. Specifically, the project will aggregate existing MCM monitoring data and collect additional data, decide how to model MCM performance, facilitate the integration of MCMs into models, and create publicly accessible tools to promote adoption of these approaches.

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

All three reviewers agree that the project's objectives are, on the whole, clearly stated. Two reviewers provided suggestions for further improving clarity, including providing more information on how the MCMs will be monitored and evaluated, and clarity on the specific roles and responsibilities of the project's stakeholder engagement group.

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 agreed that the project effectively supports the SCWP's goals of increasing stormwater or urban runoff capture and/or reducing stormwater or urban runoff pollution. All three reviewers applauded the study's focus, noting that MCMs have historically been understudied and that there is a management need to improve understanding MCM performance and to facilitate their integration into routine watershed management.

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 agreed that the technical approach will consist of collecting data on MCM performance in the L.A. region, standardizing data collection and performance evaluation methods, developing a technical approach for integrating MCMs into watershed models, and leveraging these insights to improve understanding of how to enhance and optimize MCMs to deliver maximum benefits.

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

All three reviewers pointed out information that is missing from the proposal. Two of the reviewers identified relatively few missing details, while the third reviewer identified extensive amounts of missing information. The two reviewers who identified relatively few details said they were looking for more detailed information on how MCMs will be monitored and have their performance evaluated, as well as how the study will produce a final set of tools that are built on

a rigorous technical foundation. The third reviewer indicated they were looking for more specificity for almost every task, noting a lack of detail regarding specifically how many of the tasks will be carried out.

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 disagreed on the soundness of the study's technical approach. One reviewer characterized the approach as "very sound." A second reviewer said it is "hard to tell" because of a lack of detail. And the third reviewer said the approach is "generally sound," but identified multiple areas that are unclear in the proposal, including how the MCM performance modeling will be conducted and how cost-effectiveness will be determined.

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

All three of the reviewers expressed optimism that the study's goals could be achieved within the stated timeframe and budget, but all of the reviewers caveated their optimism by noting that they would have liked to see more details to feel confident about this assessment.

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

All three reviewers identified technical risks associated with implementing this project. One reviewer expressed concerns about the project's ability to monitor, evaluate and quantify MCM performance in a "robust, credible and consistent manner." A second reviewer expressed concerns that the online tools would lack a strong technical footing. The third reviewer expressed concerns about potentially unpredictable outcomes when engaging with stakeholders, and about collecting potentially uneven data on MCM performance, which could complicate efforts to optimally integrate MCMs into watershed planning.

9. Please describe the linkages between the project's technical objectives and the types of decisions that stormwater managers will make based on the project's outcome(s)? Will the technical achievements provide stormwater managers useful linkages that extend beyond this study?

All three reviewers expressed confidence that the project has strong potential to influence management decision-making. One reviewer described the project as "high value," a second reviewer said the project could lead to increased MCM investments by local governments, and the third reviewer said the study will provide "critical tools" to inform best management practices.

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

All three reviewers suggested that the project should reach out to and learn from similar efforts by others. One reviewer suggested engaging with national groups, including the National Municipal Stormwater Alliance. A second reviewer suggested convening a national panel of technical experts to provide peer review, and possibly funding the project in a phased/adaptive manner to ensure the project's final tools are built on a strong technical foundation. The third reviewer suggested reaching out to municipalities with experience in this topic, such as Austin,

Texas, for support and guidance, particularly for areas like how to evaluate and quantify MCM performance.

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*. Please add an explanation to accompany your answer choice (or refer to the question number above for appropriate context and rationale):

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

Two of the reviewers rated the proposal's objectives as being "excellent" for addressing SCWP goals, while the other reviewer gave a "very good" rating and did not elaborate further.

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

The reviewers disagreed on the likelihood of the study achieving its objectives. One reviewer gave an "excellent" rating, one gave an "adequate" rating, and one gave an "adequate to inadequate" rating and did not elaborate further.

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

The reviewers disagreed in their assessment of the study team's capabilities. One reviewer gave an "excellent" rating, while the other two gave a "Not applicable because of insufficient information" rating. One of the latter two reviewers elaborated on their rating, noting that while the proposal makes clear that the study team is already involved with similar work, the proposal fails to describe successful completion of any of this work.

SAFE CLEAN WATER PROGRAM SCIENTIFIC STUDY PROPOSAL QUESTIONNAIRE

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

Title: **Community Garden Stormwater Capture Investigation**

Proposing Organization: **Los Angeles Community Garden Council**

Your summary of the Project Goals and Objectives:

The proposal reviewers agree that the goal of this project is to identify existing community gardens in L.A. County that are optimally suited to serve as implementation sites for BMPs, and to develop BMP design concepts for multiple sites across multiple watersheds where runoff capture/treatment could be optimized.

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

The reviewers disagree on whether the objectives are clearly stated. Two reviewers said the objectives are generally clear, while the third said the objectives are not entirely clear. One of the reviewers who indicated the objectives are generally clear said they would have liked to see more clarity on how candidate sites will be ranked and prioritized, while the other reviewer described the objectives as clear but too brief. The third, more critical reviewer said the number of watersheds to be studied is not clear – either 7 or 14, depending on where in the proposal you read – nor is there clarity around how the sites will be analyzed and what kinds of design criteria will be used.

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?

The reviewers disagree on how effectively the project supports the SCWP's goals of increasing stormwater or urban runoff capture and/or reducing stormwater or urban runoff pollution. Two of the reviewers expressed doubts, while the third reviewer expressed confidence. Of the two reviewers who expressed doubts, one questioned whether a lack of BMP concept designs for community gardens is the limiting factor and the cause of more BMPs not being built, and also questioned whether, as a result of having concept designs, more BMPs would actually be implemented in L.A. County. The other reviewer who expressed doubts pointed out that no BMPs will actually get built by the end of the project, although with additional future funding for implementation, the reviewer expressed optimism that the project could be impactful. The third reviewer expressed confidence in the proposal's potential management impact, commending the proposal for considering both site characteristics and the buy-in of community garden leaders in selecting BMP sites.

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 proposal reviewers agree that the proposal consists of the following steps: (1) compile basic information for about 750 community gardens in L.A. County, (2) narrow down these sites to a much smaller number of candidate sites using screening criteria, (3) visit the candidate sites to collect field information, (4) develop conceptual designs for implementing BMPs at a subset of the

candidate sites, and (5) develop materials to support future efforts to secure the necessary funding to implement the BMP concept designs.

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

All three reviewers expressed concerns about the lack of detail in the technical approach. One reviewer noted the lack of information about what site selection criteria will be used – specifically, if volume of stormwater the site is capable of capturing would be considered. A second reviewer noted that the proposal writer had skipped or provided little information in multiple key subsections, including neglecting to specify site selection criteria and threshold cutoffs. The third reviewer expressed concerns about the feasibility of obtaining some types of data for various sites, and the lack of detail on the role of the [SCWP] Coordinator .

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

All three reviewers expressed concerns about the technical soundness of the proposal. One reviewer deemed the technical gaps to be “significant,” noting that the proposal should have offered much more specificity around what the final concept designs will look like, what types of BMPs will be considered, and what field data will be collected. A second reviewer said that the proposal’s plan to rely on existing, publicly available soil survey data would be a mistake, as these data are “notoriously inaccurate.” The third reviewer expressed concerns about the lack of detail on BMP sizing requirements and feasibility evaluations at the sites where concept designs will be created.

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

All three reviewers agreed that the study’s timeframe and budget seem reasonable, although one reviewer said they are “somewhat unsure” about taking this stance due to insufficient technical details in the proposal. The other two reviewers said the timeframe was reasonable and that the budget might be larger than necessary.

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

All three reviewers agreed that the project could experience significant technical risks, although the reviewers had difficulty pinpointing these risks and providing solutions because of the lack of technical detail in the proposal. One reviewer questioned whether narrowing down the sites during the screening process will result in a viable list of candidate sites, and also whether the site selection data to be collected will identify all relevant site-specific factors that the project team will need to know when preparing its concept designs (and moreover, that managers will need to know to sign off on the design plans). A second reviewer expressed concerns about improper soils or groundwater elevation data sets resulting in multiple candidate sites identified through the evaluation process being ultimately disqualified during the concept design stage. The third reviewer expressed concerns that the proposal does not explicitly identify all of the data sets that

will be collected, noting that the quality of these data sets will determine the feasibility of the project itself.

9. Please describe the linkages between the project’s technical objectives and the types of decisions that stormwater managers will make based on the project’s outcome(s)? Will the technical achievements provide stormwater managers useful linkages that extend beyond this study?

The reviewers disagreed on whether the study will produce results useful to stormwater managers. Two of the reviewers expressed doubts, with one noting that it remains unclear whether the BMP concept designs developed through this project will actually be implemented, and the other reviewer noting that with no plan for data collection presented, the proposal is unlikely to advance management practices. The third reviewer expressed confidence in the proposal’s potential management impact, noting that the study will give managers a list of sites that are appropriate for implementing BMPs.

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

All three reviewers provided additional perspectives expressing doubts about the technical underpinnings of the proposal. One reviewer said that the proposal should have discussed the positive impact of “green jobs” creation, and provided more detailed cost justification, especially given that some watersheds have many more community gardens to evaluate than others. A second reviewer expressed disappointment that the proposal did not highlight how much stormwater could be captured if the BMP concept designs to be developed via this study were to all be eventually implemented; the second reviewer also noted that many of the sites – being former housing plots – are likely to be above street level, which would require implementing BMPs requiring disruptive excavation work. The third reviewer simply expressed disappointment at the lack of technical detail in the proposal.

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.* Please add an explanation to accompany your answer choice (or refer to the question number above for appropriate context and rationale):

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

Two of the reviewers rated the proposal’s objectives as being “adequate” for addressing SCWP goals, but simultaneously used their rating to criticize the proposal, with one reviewer noting that community gardens may not be optimal BMP locations in the first place and may not have sizeable-enough watersheds to justify placing BMPs in them, and the other characterizing the project’s final products as “underwhelming for the total budget proposed.” The third reviewer provided a “Not applicable because of insufficient information” rating.

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

All three reviewers rated the chances of the project achieving its stated outcomes as “adequate.” One of the reviewers did not elaborate, while the other two reiterated their concerns about the lack of technical detail.

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

All three reviewers provided a “Not applicable because of insufficient information” rating, with one explicitly calling out the fact that no information was provided for any members of the project team, except for the proposal writer.