Measure Q FY 2026-27 Grant Program Guidelines

Draft for COAB review | October 21, 2026



Office of Response, Recovery & Resilience (OR3)
Department of Parks, Open Space & Cultural Services

The second grant cycle builds on the first

~$2.5M

available each year through the competitive grant program (40% of revenue)

2nd

annual grant cycle, shaped by the FY 2025-26 after-action review and feedback

12

month funding cycle; a 2-year cycle may be considered with COAB in the future

Application content, scores, awards, and reports are public and available on request.

Award ranges shift up for both tiers

Tier 1: Community Catalyst

$10,000 to $50,000

Minimum raised from $5,000

New ideas, local stewardship, community education, and smaller projects or planning.

Tier 2: Community Impact

$50,000 to $600,000

Maximum raised from $500,000

Larger multi-benefit projects: habitat restoration, fuel reduction, watershed and capital work.

Tier 2 set-asides (unchanged): at least $600,000 for San Vicente Redwoods, and at least $600,000 for up to 3 grants benefiting the Pajaro Valley.

Outcomes decide the tier

Education and access projects apply in Tier 1

Projects with only educational or access outcomes are limited to Tier 1 this cycle. Examples:

- Environmental education programs
- Field trips
- Transportation to parks for disadvantaged youth

Applications report outcomes

Outcome metrics are required, such as acres treated, community engaged, or miles of trail.

Scores reward measurable targets

Top Community Benefit scores go to projects with specific, measurable target outcomes.

Tier 1 builds toward more

Tier 1 scoring rewards building capacity for future Tier 2 or outside grant funding.

Emphasis on project delivery, not operations

Not for fixed operating costs

The grant program is not intended to serve as funding source for fixed program operating costs, administrative overhead, or permanent staff not tied to a specific project.

Repeat applicants must show what is new

Last cycle's grantees may not reapply for the same project unless it is new or adds deliverables, service areas, or outcomes.

Staff verify before scoring

The application must explain what is new if awarded under the FY2025-26 grant cycle. County staff confirm this before the application moves to scoring.

Scoring rubrics: 100 points plus up to 5 bonus

Tier 1 (new point weights)

Category	Points
Vision Plan alignment	40
Community benefit	30
Feasibility	20
Innovation or capacity	10
Bonus	5

Both tiers: calibration guidance will specify top scores go to multi-benefit projects, projects from regional plans/prioritization efforts, and projects with specific, measurable outcomes.

Tier 2 (changes in orange)

Category	Points
Vision Plan alignment	25
Community benefit	20
Wildlife & environmental benefit	**20 (was 15)**
Feasibility & readiness	15
Budget, cost effectiveness & leveraging	10
Maintenance & monitoring	5
Partnerships & collaboration	**5 (was 10)**
Bonus	5

Evaluation and award process

1

Staff review

Eligibility and completeness check

2

Independent scoring

At least 3 scores each; no discussion while scoring; then review of high-variance scores

3

Preliminary to COAB

All materials, scores, and comments published

4

Final to COAB

Staff consult top applicants on partial awards

5

Board approval

Board of Supervisors approves final awards

San Vicente Redwoods set-aside: not scored competitively, as long as projects are eligible and total requests do not exceed $600,000.

Staff bring one final award recommendation

Scores are the main basis. Staff draw from top-ranked projects, then balance the portfolio.

Project types

A mix of project types across the portfolio.

Geographic reach

Projects spread across the county.

Vision Plan themes

All 3 priority themes represented.

If a lower-ranked project is recommended over a higher-ranked one, staff will document the reason and share it with the COAB, the Board of Supervisors, and the public.

Funding policy updates

Indirect costs

Public agencies may request up to 10% with justification. Nonprofits and tribes stay at up to 15%.

Living wage

Agreements may be subject to County Code Chapter 2.122. Grantees should check and budget for it.

Cost categories

Personnel, contractual, supplies, equipment, other direct, and indirect costs now have clear definitions.

Next steps



Tonight

COAB feedback on the draft guidelines

Nov 10, 2026

Revised guidelines go to the Board of Supervisors

Nov 2026 to Feb 2027

Application period (approximate)

Spring 2027

Completeness review, then scoring

Questions or comments: MeasureQ@santacruzcountyca.gov