

Measure Q Grant Program Guidelines

Inaugural Cycle (FY 2025–2026)



**Administered jointly by the County of Santa Cruz
Office of Response, Recovery & Resilience (OR3)
and the Department of Parks, Open Space & Cultural Services (Parks)**

NOTE: This is the inaugural year of the Measure Q Grant Program. Program guidelines may be refined in future cycles based on community feedback, program evaluation findings, and County priorities.

1. Program Purpose & Authority

The Measure Q Grant Program is being established to advance the community's long-term resilience, environmental health, and access to parks and open space upon the successful passing of Measure Q in November of 2024 by the voters of Santa Cruz County. It supports projects and programs that contribute to improved water quality, strengthened wildfire resilience, enhanced habitat protection, and equitable access to parks and natural spaces throughout Santa Cruz County. In conjunction with these grant guidelines, a 5-year Vision Plan was generated after a steadfast process participated by County staff, non-profit and agency stakeholders and community members. The Vision Plan ([linked here](#)) is the guiding document for the Measure Q grant program and functions as the program's roadmap, translating the goals of the [Measure Q Act](#) into clear investment priorities for the next five years. It draws from existing County and State plans to identify where Measure Q funds can have the greatest impact, and all grant proposals must show how they support the Plan's priority actions and community-identified needs.

These guidelines outline the structure, requirements, and administrative procedures used to allocate 40% of the tax measure or approximately \$2.5 million annually in grant funds. All funded projects must align with the Measure Q Vision Plan and demonstrate benefits to residents, natural resources, or ecosystems within the County. As this is the inaugural cycle, the County anticipates refining and improving the program over time based on community engagement, implementation lessons, and evolving needs.

All grant applications, scoring, awards and reporting content will be publicly available and viewable upon request to ensure transparency and accountability in the implementation of the Measure Q grant program.

2. Program Structure & Funding Tiers

The Measure Q Grant Program consists of two tiers designed to support both emerging community-based initiatives and larger-scale projects with substantial countywide or regional impact.

Tier 1 - Community Catalyst Grants, ranging from \$5,000 to \$50,000 – This tier is intended to help organizations test new ideas, expand local stewardship efforts, deliver community education, or complete smaller project, restoration or planning activities.

Tier 2 - Community Impact Grants, ranging from \$50,000 to \$500,000 – This tier supports more complex, multi-benefit projects such as large habitat restoration, fuel reduction along critical wildfire interfaces, watershed enhancement work, or capital improvements that expand community access. While the County provides annual funding



targets, the specific funding distribution between Tier 1 and Tier 2 may adjust over time based on applicant demand and community need.

Tier 2 Community Impact Grants also incorporate two dedicated annual funding allocations established by the Measure Q Act:

- “At least \$600,000” for projects on the County’s largest conservation easement supporting forest health, fire resilience, natural habitat restoration, and public access, referred to as the “San Vicente Redwoods”.
- “At least \$600,000” for up to 3 grants benefitting residents in the Pajaro Valley, including areas within one mile of the Watsonville Slough system, Pinto Lake, and the Pajaro River and its tributaries.

These dedicated allocations ensure that Measure Q resources directly address the County’s highest-priority landscapes facing wildfire vulnerability, flooding risk, and water quality challenges.

The current inaugural Fiscal Year 2025-26 grant program is proposed for a 12-month funding cycle, meaning funding will be allocated annually. Further consideration following initial grant applications and potential awards for the inaugural year may shift this program to a 2-year funding cycle depending on grant application volume and Citizen Oversight Advisory Board consideration.

3. Eligibility Requirements

Eligible applicants are limited to the entities defined in the Measure Q Act:

- **Public Agencies,**
- **Nonprofit Organizations described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, and**
- **Tribes.**

All applicants must propose projects that qualify as “Eligible Projects” under the Act, County Code Chapter 4.65 outlines the measure, and 4.65.040(B)(1) provides further detail ([HERE](#)) meaning activities that implement the goals of Measure Q through planning, feasibility, acquisition, construction, development, restoration, stewardship, maintenance, or related work. Projects must occur within Santa Cruz County or demonstrate clear public benefit to the County’s residents, watersheds, natural resources, or ecosystems. Applicants must also demonstrate the administrative and fiscal capacity to complete the proposed work, comply with grant agreement



requirements, and provide accurate reporting and documentation as required by the County.

Grant applications are not required to have permits associated with the proposed project obtained prior to application or award, however identifying permit process and requirements is part of the application.

4. Funding Policies: Advances, Reimbursements, Indirect Costs, and Match

Grant Fund Advancement:

Advance funding requests are only allowed towards organizations that are nonprofit, community-based organizations granted tax-exempt status under IRC Section 501. **Tier 1** grantees may request an advance of up to **25%** of the award to support project initiation, while **Tier 2** grantees **may request** an advance of **up to 15%** on a case-by-case basis. Recipients of advance payments in either Tier program are subject to other additional requirements per Section 300 (E) of the County's Board approved Policy and Procedure Manual ([linked here](#)).

Reimbursement:

Standard reimbursements are available for all grants and must be supported by documentation. Typical reimbursement will be a net 30 days upon receipt of request and documentation acceptance. Reimbursement requests may be submitted no more than monthly. Final invoice and repayment including 10% retainer may be allowed after grant term to ensure full accounting for closeout and program or project activities.

Indirect Costs:

Nonprofit organizations may include up to 15% of the award as indirect costs, while other entities may request indirect costs with justification. Indirect costs are organizational expenses not directly associated with grant project or program delivery. Staff overhead costs associated with project or program delivery are not included in this percentage.

Match:

Although no match is required, all applicants are encouraged to document financial or leveraged fund contributions such as volunteer hours, donated materials and services, or partner support to strengthen competitiveness.

5. Consecutive Funding Limitations

To support equitable access to Measure Q resources, the program may limit the number of consecutive award cycles for any single organization, project or program. Exceptions



may be granted for projects with countywide significance, critical environmental or infrastructure needs, or unique technical expertise that is not available elsewhere within the region.

6. Application Requirements

Applicants must submit a complete application online through the Measure Q website. Required components include a detailed project narrative, a comprehensive budget worksheet, a proposed timeline and work plan, project site map(s) or geographic descriptions, effectiveness metric (such as: acres treated, community engaged, miles/feet of trail), equity and accessibility explanations, and organizational information. CEQA documentation must be included when applicable.

The application format will follow the scoring rubric outlined in the following section. All application content will be made publicly available during award consideration after initial scoring and recommendations have been made.

Letters of support from partners, neighbors, or collaborating organizations are strongly encouraged. Applications must be complete and submitted by the stated deadline to be considered for funding.

7. Scoring Rubric (100 Points)

Applications will be evaluated using a 100-point scoring system. Tier 1 applications are assessed based on equity and access, project feasibility, alignment with the Measure Q Vision Plan, community benefit, and budget clarity. Tier 2 applications use the same categories with different weights to reflect increased project complexity and expected impact. Reviewers may also assign bonus points for proposals that demonstrate strong partnerships, clear multi-benefit outcomes, or efficient use of funds, such as Tier 2 projects proposing indirect costs below 10%.

Tier 1 – Community Catalyst Grant Program (Total: 100 Points)

Scoring Category	Description	Points Available
Alignment with Measure Q Vision Plan	Project clearly supports priority actions, geographies, or outcomes identified in the Vision Plan.	0-40
Community Benefit	Demonstrates meaningful community recreation and public access, ecological, watershed or wildfire-resilience	0-30



	benefits.	
Feasibility	Provides a realistic scope, achievable timeline, clear deliverables, and evidence of adequate staffing or partnerships. Funding or collaborative leveraging of resources will also be considered.	0-20
Innovation or Capacity	Encourages new ideas, pilot approaches, or builds capacity for future Measure Q projects.	0-10
Bonus Points (Optional)	Strong partnerships, volunteer hours leverage, leveraged funds, or particularly efficient use of funds received.	0-5

Tier 2 – Community Impact Grant Program (Total: 100 Points)

Scoring Category	Description	Points Available
Alignment with Measure Q Vision Plan	Strongly advances Vision Plan priorities such as watershed health, wildfire resilience, habitat restoration, climate adaptation, or community access.	0-25
Community Benefit	Demonstrates meaningful community recreation and public access, ecological, watershed or wildfire-resilience benefits.	0-20
Wildlife & Environmental Benefit	Improves water, habitat, or climate resilience	0-15
Project Feasibility & Readiness	Demonstrates technical soundness, clear methodology, permitting readiness (if applicable), qualified personnel, and achievable milestones.	0-15
Partnerships & Collaboration	Strength of partnerships, leveraging, volunteer engagement, multi-agency scope.	0-10
Budget, Cost-Effectiveness & Leveraging	Budget is well-constructed, logical, and justified; leveraged funds strengthen competitiveness.	0-10
Long-term Maintenance & Monitoring	Plan for sustained benefits or data monitoring post-grant	0-5
Bonus Points (Optional)	Exceptional readiness, regional significance, strong partnerships, high leverage, or long-term stewardship commitments.	0-5



8. Grant Term & Reporting Requirements

Initial grant terms are 12 months, with the option to extend up to an additional 24 months when justified by project scope, timing, or seasonal constraints. Larger or more complex projects may receive additional time with County approval. Tier 1 grantees are required to submit a final report at project completion, while Tier 2 grantees must provide progress reports no less than every 6 months, submit updates with each reimbursement request, and complete a final report within 60 days of project end. The County may withhold up to 10 percent of the award until all deliverables and reporting requirements are satisfied. Grantees must also provide an impact narrative summarizing benefits such as populations served, acres treated, environmental improvements achieved, equity outcomes, and any upstream or downstream benefits.

9. Allowable and Restricted Costs

Allowable expenses include organizational personnel and their overhead costs, contractors, consultants, supplies, equipment purchase or rentals, CEQA compliance, permitting, and direct project outreach and construction costs as it relates to eligible projects. This can include pre-project assistance and feasibility, planning, acquisition, construction, development, improvement, restoration, rehabilitation, maintenance, stewardship, or any combination thereof.

Costs must be reasonable, necessary, and directly tied to the approved project scope.

Equipment purchased with grant funds must be in direct support of the proposed “eligible project” (see [code section 4.65.010](#) (K) for eligible project definition). Specific equipment accountability requirements may be required contingent on grant amount and equipment costs.

Restricted costs include unapproved general administrative overhead, political or lobbying activities, fines or penalties, and any expenditure not aligned with the approved scope of work. All costs must comply with local, State, and Federal requirements and follow sound financial management practices.

10. Audit, Records, and Compliance

Grantees must maintain financial and project records for at least three years after final payment. The County, Citizens Oversight Advisory Board, or authorized auditors may review or reproduce project records at any reasonable time. Grantees must comply with all applicable laws, including prevailing wage requirements when triggered. The County reserves the right to withhold or recover funds for non-performance, misuse, or non-compliance with the grant agreement.



11. Recognition Requirements

All public-facing materials, signage, and communications must acknowledge Measure Q support using the required language: “Funded by the County of Santa Cruz Measure Q – Safe Drinking Water, Clean Beaches, Wildfire Risk Reduction and Wildlife Protection Act” and use the Measure Q logo in the signage. Multi-year projects must submit annual impact reports in addition to periodic financial reporting.

12. Program Administration & Review Process

The Measure Q Grant Program is jointly administered by OR3 and the Department of Parks, Open Space & Cultural Services. The following process outlines the steps from Measure Q grant application to grant awards for all Tiers of grants. The geographic set aside for the San Vicente Redwoods apportionment will not be subject to this process.

1. Applications undergo internal review for completeness determination, once deemed complete all applications will be considered final.
 - a. Applicants may be asked for additional information to ensure completeness. The intent of this step is not to eliminate applications based on general missing information.
2. Grant application evaluation and scoring by external reviewer(s)
 - a. Initial review and scoring will be presented to the Measure Q Administrative Staff
3. Grant application evaluation and scoring by Measure Q Administrative Staff
4. Preliminary Grant Award Recommendations presented to the COAB
 - a. All Grant application materials and all scoring will be provided to COAB at this time.
5. COAB Review and Grant Award Review and Recommendations
 - a. OR3 and Parks staff will integrate COAB feedback, recommendations into final recommendation.
6. Final Grant award Recommendations presented to and approved by COAB
7. Final Grant Awards determined and approved by County Board of Supervisors.
 - a. This final grant award approval will be based on the staff recommendations and COAB approved grant award recommendations.

13. Appendices

Appendices included in these guidelines will provide templates and reference materials to support applicants. These include:

- Budget Worksheet Template
- Sample Project Timeline
- CEQA Documentation Guidance



- Project Site Map Requirements
- Organizational Information Template and Application Checklist
- Sample Measure Q Recognition Signage

If your project does not require one of these completed appendices, please submit with "not applicable" in the detail section. Templates may be updated or expanded in future cycles as program needs evolve.



Measure Q Grant Program Guidelines

Appendices



**Administered jointly by the County of Santa Cruz
Office of Response, Recovery & Resilience (OR3)
and the Department of Parks, Open Space & Cultural Services (Parks)**

NOTE: This is the inaugural year of the Measure Q Grant Program. Program guidelines, templates and reference materials may be refined in future cycles based on community feedback, program evaluation findings, and County priorities.

Measure Q Grant Program Guidelines

Appendix A: Budget Worksheet Template



Appendix A – Budget Worksheet

This appendix is provided as guidance. Final requirements may be clarified during contracting. Applicants should ensure consistency with the Measure Q Vision Plan.

COST CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	ESTIMATED COST (\$)	ADVANCE REQUESTED	NOTES
Personnel (Direct)			YES NO	
Contractors/ Consultants			YES NO	
Supplies & Materials			YES NO	
Equipment (Project-Specific)			YES NO	
CEQA/Permitting Costs (if applicable)			YES NO	
Outreach & Engagement			YES NO	
Other Direct Costs			YES NO	
Subtotal – Direct Costs			YES NO	
Indirect Costs (Max 15%)			YES NO	
TOTAL PROJECT COST				



Measure Q Grant Program Guidelines

Appendix B: Sample Project Timelines



Appendix B – Sample Project Timelines

This appendix is provided as guidance. Final requirements may be clarified during contracting. Applicants should ensure consistency with the Measure Q Vision Plan.

12-Month Example

Please include all project milestones including but not limited to project kickoff, permitting/CEQA (if applicable), implementation, mobilization, program start date, reporting tied to reimbursements, and conclude with anticipated closeout date, no later than within one year of award date (approximately June 2026).

24-Month Example

Please illustrate any phased implementation, seasonal constraints, project milestones, and anticipated final deliverable date within two years of award date (approximately June 2026).



Measure Q Grant Program Guidelines

Appendix C: CEQA Guidance



Appendix C – CEQA Documentation Guidance

This appendix is provided as guidance. Final requirements may be clarified during contracting. Applicants should ensure consistency with the Measure Q Vision Plan.

Overview

Measure Q funding does not confer CEQA exemption. Applicants must identify the current CEQA status or attach an approved Notice of Exemption (NOE) if eligible.

Lead Agency

County is not CEQA lead agency by association in awarding Measure Q funds to projects. Applicants must provide all contact information (legal name, governing body, and primary contact) for lead agency if not the applicant.



Measure Q Grant Program Guidelines

Appendix D: Project Site Map Requirements



Appendix D – Project Site Map Requirements

This appendix is provided as guidance. Final requirements may be clarified during contracting. Applicants should ensure consistency with the Measure Q Vision Plan.

Required Elements

Please provide an aerial map of the project site. APNs are mandatory and if project occurs in multiple location, please denote the agency site address APN. Maps must show project boundaries and relevant geographic context as applicable.

Additional Context (If Applicable)

Include disadvantaged communities, watersheds, fire hazard zones, and Vision Plan priority areas when relevant to the project area.



Measure Q Grant Program Guidelines

Appendix E: Organizational Information Checklist



Appendix E – Organizational Information Template & Application Checklist

This appendix is provided as guidance. Final requirements may be clarified during contracting. Applicants should ensure consistency with the Measure Q Vision Plan.

Organizational Details

Please list legal name, IRS status, mission statement if available, governing body, and primary contacts.

Pre- and Post-Award Readiness

Please include fiscal controls, insurance, audits, and capacity to comply with County requirements.

Measure Q Grant Program Guidelines

Appendix F: Sample Recognition Signage



Appendix F – Sample Measure Q Recognition Signage

This appendix is provided as guidance. Final requirements may be clarified during contracting. Applicants should ensure consistency with the Measure Q Vision Plan.

Purpose

These guidelines ensure consistent public acknowledgement of projects funded in whole or in part by Measure Q, Santa Cruz County's Safe Drinking Water, Clean Beaches, Wildfire Risk Reduction, and Wildlife Protection Act.

Who Must Comply

All County departments, incorporated cities, nonprofits, special districts, and tribal entities receiving Measure Q funding.

Required Acknowledgement Language

“Funded by the County of Santa Cruz Measure Q: Safe Drinking Water, Clean Beaches, Wildfire Risk Reduction, and Wildlife Protection Act.”

Logo Use

Use the official Measure Q logo. The logo may not be altered, distorted, or recolored and must be displayed with clear space and comparable prominence to other major funders.

Signage for Physical Projects

Temporary signage is required for construction or on-site projects when feasible. Permanent acknowledgement such as plaques or interpretive panels is encouraged for lasting improvements.

Digital and Print Materials

Acknowledge Measure Q funding on project websites, press releases, reports, presentations, and outreach materials produced with Measure Q funds.

Exceptions

Exceptions may be approved for sensitive sites, private lands, or small-scale projects where physical signage is impractical.

Review and Compliance

All acknowledgement plans and signage designs must be reviewed by County staff prior to use. Noncompliance may delay reimbursements or require corrective action.



YOUR TAX DOLLARS AT WORK
**[INSERT NAME OF GRANT FUNDED
PROJECT OR LOCATION]**

Funded by the County of Santa Cruz Measure Q:
Safe Drinking Water, Clean Beaches, Wildfire Risk Reduction and
Wildlife Protection Act



**[INSERT NAME OF GRANT
FUNDED PROJECT OR LOCATION]**

Funded by the County of Santa Cruz Measure Q:
Safe Drinking Water, Clean Beaches, Wildfire Risk
Reduction and Wildlife Protection Act



YOUR TAX DOLLARS AT WORK

**NAME OF GRANT FUNDED
PROJECT/LOCATION**

Funded by the County of
Santa Cruz Measure Q:
Safe Drinking Water, Clean
Beaches, Wildfire Risk
Reduction and Wildlife
Protection Act

