



THE SOUTHWESTERN WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Developing and Conserving the Waters of the
SAN JUAN AND DOLORES RIVERS AND THEIR TRIBUTARIES
IN SOUTHWESTERN COLORADO

2027 GRANT PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Southwestern Water Conservation District Background

The Southwestern Water Conservation District (“SWCD”) is a political subdivision of the State that was established by the Colorado General Assembly in 1941 to protect, conserve, use, and develop the water resources of the San Juan and Dolores River Basins as well as to safeguard all waters to which the state of Colorado is equitably entitled.¹ SWCD periodically offers financial assistance in the form of grants to qualified entities², that are carrying out projects consistent with SWCD’s statutory purposes. Funding for this program is subject to SWCD’s discretion, annual budget, and appropriation process. The Board retains the right, in its sole discretion, to approve, reduce, or deny any grant request.

Before applying, please ensure you can answer “yes” to each of the following questions:

- ☒ Are you a qualified entity²?
- ☒ Are you located within the SWCD’s boundaries?
- ☒ Is the project anticipated to start and finish in 2027?
- ☒ Are you actively contributing to your project with matching funds or in-kind services? If cash, are these funds from your organization or another grant/source? SWCD generally requires at least 25% match of the total project costs³.
- ☒ Is the SWCD grant request less than 50% of the total project cost?
- ☒ Have you spoken with SWCD staff (Josh Brooks, 970-247-1302) about the project and grant application before submission?

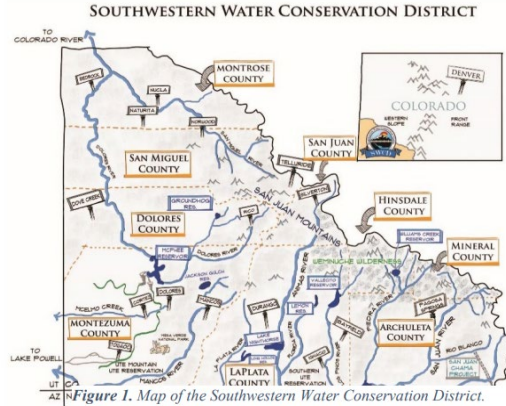


Figure 1. Map of the Southwestern Water Conservation District.

¹ See C.R.S. § 37-47-101 through -151

² See “Additional Requirements” for definition

³ See “Matching Exceptions” for list of exceptions

1.0 General Program Information

For the 2027 grant program, applications may be submitted from **September 4 through November 6th, 2026**. Applicants are encouraged to submit their application as early as possible so that there is adequate time to work with SWCD staff to ensure that the application meets all requirements in advance of the November 7th deadline. Generally, funding decisions on grant applications will be made by the SWCD Board at its first regularly scheduled meeting of 2027 (generally held in February).

Emergency Grant Requests: The deadlines provided above apply to routine grant requests and can be modified at the discretion of the SWCD Board to address emergencies. Emergency Requests typically stem from a natural disaster or other severe weather-related event and include but are not limited to: flood events causing damage to diversion, storage, or measurement structures; catastrophic canal or pipeline failure that prevents the delivery of water; imminent or actual spillway or dam failure, wildfire impacts including post-fire runoff, and other impacts; and toxic spills. Projects that result from or are exacerbated by deferred maintenance do not qualify. Please contact SWCD staff directly if this occurs to discuss submitting an emergency grant application. SWCD will not consider grant requests for entities that do not have appropriate reserves, have not adequately or proactively maintained their water supply systems, or have shown a lack of preparation for an emergency event.

SWCD annually anticipates receiving grant requests well over the available funds. The maximum amount of money potentially available from SWCD in the 2027 calendar year for all grant recipients is listed in the table below.

Grant Funding Category	<u>Proposed 2027 Funds Available</u> <i>Total Grant Program \$250,000</i>	<u>Annual Max Grant</u> <i>Request per Applicant per Category</i>	<u>Five-Year Max</u> <i>Grant Funds received per Applicant per Category</i>
Water Supply/Watershed Restoration: Water supply or watershed restoration or enhancement projects, including design, engineering, and construction	\$125,000	\$60,000	\$120,000
Public Forums/Studies: Public forums, workgroups, studies, planning efforts	\$50,000	\$20,000	\$40,000
Education: Teaching seminars, workshops, and related programs	\$25,000	\$10,000	\$20,000
Emergency requests: flood events causing damage to diversion, storage, or measurement structures; catastrophic canal or pipeline failure that prevents the delivery of water; imminent or actual spillway or dam failure, wildfire impacts, including post-fire runoff, and toxic spills	\$50,000 + any remaining unallocated grant funds	\$50,000	\$50,000

Drought Response: Irrigation efficiency projects, water storage, delivery & conveyance improvements, water measurement, drought feasibility studies	\$50,000 Comprised of unallocated EOY 2026 funds	\$50,000	\$50,000
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If, as part of budget development for the upcoming fiscal year, the board adjusts the total grant program funding available, funding allocations by category will be adjusted proportionally or based on Board recommendations.

Any member of SWCD’s Board of Directors or Staff with a financial or property interest in a grant request will disclose any such interest or any other conflict of interest and recuse themselves from participating in any recommendation, vote, or decision-making process related to that grant request.

2.0 Additional Requirements

Eligibility:

SWCD will only consider grant requests from “qualified entities” for (1) development or improvement of water supply and watershed restoration or enhancement projects, including related design, engineering, and construction, (2) studies and facilitating stakeholder involvement in water-related matters, including water quality, (3) educational purposes, including teaching seminars, workshop, and related programs, and (4) emergency situations. “Qualified entities” are defined by statute to include any public entity, non-profit corporation, not-for-profit corporation, carrier ditch company, mutual ditch or reservoir company, unincorporated ditch or reservoir company, or cooperative association within the boundaries of SWCD.⁴ All projects, studies, and program grants will be limited to “raw” or untreated water supplies, except as provided below. Only projects or portions of projects located within the SWCD’s boundaries are eligible for grant funding.

SWCD will **not** consider grant requests or funding for;

- a. Completed Projects; however, the board may make an exception for projects completed within the past six months arising from the emergencies;
- b. Municipal or domestic drinking water projects that do not qualify as a “public water system,” which is defined for the purposes of these guidelines to mean any system that does not have a public water system ID number with the state of Colorado;
- c. Any part of a municipal or domestic “public water system” which is unrelated to raw water storage or delivery. Applications for eligible portions of the public water system should include the state ID number for the system;
- d. Wastewater treatment projects;

⁴ C.R.S. § 37-47-107(1)(j.5).

- e. Legal fees or payroll costs. SWCD will not pay an employee's salary or hourly wages but may consider paying for crew or seasonal work as it pertains to the specific project described in the grant proposal. If your project includes salary or hourly wages for employees, please identify them as a separate line item in the proposed budget and explain how you will pay for those costs without using SWCD grant funds. If you want to apply for funding for crew or seasonal project work, please identify this in your application, extra documentation may be required by the Board to approve such requests. Paying for an employee's time will be at the discretion of the board;
- f. Grant administration costs; or
- g. Weed management projects, although consideration will be given to programs that specifically remove phreatophytes if the Applicant demonstrates it has a plan, including funding, for appropriate revegetation and ongoing maintenance.
- h. Projects that arise due to lack of proper maintenance or lack of maintaining sufficient financial reserves to address routine maintenance and unforeseen events.

Matching Contributions

SWCD will not award a grant for more than 50% of the total project costs,⁵ and Applicants must demonstrate that they are actively contributing to the project for which they are requesting a grant. Any grant approval and release of funds will be contingent on the recipient demonstrating that they have secured funding for the remaining total project costs.

In addition, Applicants or beneficiaries of the proposed project must also demonstrate that they will provide, through a cash contribution and/or in-kind goods or services, at least 25% of the total project costs (in other words, half of the matching funds)⁶. Applications proposing the use of in-kind goods and services as all or a portion of the required matching contribution must provide detailed information identifying the time and valuation (at an hourly or total project rate) of in-kind contributions. The Board may, at their discretion, consider previous expenditures directly related to the proposed project as matching contributions if those expenditures occurred within six months of the grant application deadline. Matching Contributions Exceptions:

Non-profit, or non-governmental organizations, serving on behalf of a broad group of local constituents that do not receive tax revenues and do not have opportunities for third-party contributions for the project, may request a reduction of the match requirement to 10% of the total project cost (subject to approval by the Board) by garnering and documenting strong community or watershed support for the project.

⁵ For multi-phase projects, "total project costs" shall mean all costs related to the particular phase of the project for which the Applicant is requesting funding.

⁶ Multi-phase projects, "total project costs" shall mean all costs related to the particular phase of the project for which the Applicant is requesting funding.

Applicants that are actively pursuing large state, federal, or other grants may request a reduction in match. In these cases, applicants must describe the Grants being applied to and how SWCD dollars will be used to leverage these funds.

Limits on Grant Funding

The amount of funding each “qualified entity” may receive from SWCD is further limited to the following:

- a. Recipients of grants for the development or improvement of water-related projects may not receive more than \$60,000 in a single year or a total of \$120,000 in any given five-year period.
- b. Recipients of grants for participation in public forums and the performance of studies may not receive more than \$20,000 in any single year or a total of \$40,000 in any given five-year period.
- c. Recipients of grants for educational purposes may not receive more than \$10,000 in a single year or a total of \$20,000 in any given five-year period.
- d. Recipients of grants for Emergency purposes may not receive more than \$50,000 in a single year or a total of \$50,000 in any given five-year period.

Exceptions: For qualified entities that have multiple departments/programs, they may request that five-year limits apply only to singular departments or programs. Ultimately, departments or programs that are considered for this exception will have to demonstrate that their budget operates separately from the larger entities' whole budget. For example, the department or program is required to find its own funding for programs through grants and other means.

Award Rescission

The District reserves the right to rescind, modify, or withdraw a grant award at any time if it determines, in its sole discretion, that doing so is necessary or appropriate. This may include, but is not limited to, circumstances involving changes in eligibility, non-compliance with grant requirements, misrepresentation or material changes in the proposed project, availability of funding, or other circumstances that affect the District’s ability or willingness to support the awarded project. Any funds that have not yet been disbursed may be withheld, and the District may require the return of previously disbursed funds where permitted by applicable law and the terms of the grant agreement.

3.0 Application Instructions and Process

Completion of SWCD’s application is required for SWCD to consider grant requests. The Board will not consider applications that do not meet the minimum requirements. To ensure consideration

for funding by SWCD, please apply for a grant before the water project, study or educational program has been initiated.

2027 SWCD Grant Application

Each application should be filled in electronically (highly preferred) or printed legibly and include, at a minimum, the required information indicated by a required field. If submitting a printed document, all applications and supporting documentation must be submitted in a single file. Applications submitted in multiple files will not be considered. For printed applications, please attach additional sheets as necessary to fully answer any question to assure that all information that might help evaluate your application is considered. Please return the **signed copy** of the application to Southwestern Water Conservation District and retain a copy for your records. Please submit to the following address or email: Southwestern Water Conservation District, 841 E. 2nd Avenue, Durango, CO 81301, *or* admin@swwcd.org. Once your grant application is received, it will be reviewed by SWCD staff to ensure that it meets the minimum requirements before consideration by the Board.

The Board will review and consider grant applications at the first Regular Board meeting in 2027. Applicants are encouraged to attend the meeting at which the funding requests will be considered, either in person or virtually, so that they can provide a brief summary of their grant request and answer questions that may arise. The Board requests a thorough, completed application form be submitted in lieu of a formal presentation.

For questions about the application or board meeting, please contact SWCD staff by phone (970-247-1302) or e-mail (admin@swwcd.org). For your reference, agendas are generally posted to the swwcd.org website one week prior to regular board meetings.

4.0 Evaluation Criteria

Grant proposals will be evaluated based on how well the proposed project, study, or educational request carries out the purposes, mission, and strategic priorities of SWCD. The Board will give special consideration to grant proposals that further the use or protection of pre-compact water rights and the development of Colorado River Compact entitlements as well as educational-related requests that complement or otherwise further SWCD's existing programs.

Furthermore, Applicants must demonstrate adequate shareholder assessments and reserves for ongoing operation, maintenance, and repair of their infrastructure. The Board will give favorable consideration to grant proposals from Applicants that are proactively and financially planning for their own future needs.

5.0 Fund Disbursement

Once a grant application has been reviewed and approved by the Board, a request for the release of grant funds may be made during 2027. If the Applicant will not be able to use the funds in that year, please contact the SWCD office as soon as possible.

For grant funds to be released, the Applicant must complete the following tasks:

1. Sign the “Document of Understanding” that accompanies the grant approval letter;
2. Complete a “Request for Release of Funds” form found on the SWCD website, [Financial Assistance Program - Southwestern Water Conservation District \(swwcd.org\)](http://www.swwcd.org);
3. Provide valid W-9;
4. Provide written documentation that all committed matching funds have been secured;
5. Provide written documentation that the Applicant continues to be a qualified entity

The signature of the Applicant’s authorized representative on the “Request for Release of Funds” form indicates that the funds are needed at that time and that the Applicant ensures and verifies that the funds are only being used for the specific purpose(s) described in the application and amount(s) indicated in SWCD’s grant approval letter. The Applicant agrees to allow SWCD to display a public notice identifying the project or activity as partially funded by the SWCD.

All grants awarded through this program shall be administered on a reimbursement basis. Grant recipients must first incur and pay eligible project expenses and then submit a Request for Release of Funds, together with supporting documentation acceptable to SWCD, including but not limited to invoices, receipts, proof of payment, contractor pay applications, or other records demonstrating that the expenses have been incurred and paid. SWCD reserves the right to review all submitted documentation and determine the eligibility of requested reimbursements prior to the release of grant funds. Reimbursement requests may be denied, reduced, or delayed if sufficient documentation is not provided or if the expenses are determined to be inconsistent with the approved grant application or award conditions.

The reimbursement requirement set forth herein may be waived, in whole or in part, by staff upon a finding that advance payment is necessary to facilitate the successful completion of the approved project, study, or program, there is a proven financial need, and is in the best interest of the District.

In the event the project, study, or program for which the grant was awarded ultimately comes under budget, the grant recipient must return a pro-rata portion of the remaining funds to SWCD within 45 days of completion. For example, if the completed project, study, or program is \$20,000 under budget and SWCD contributed 20% of the total anticipated project costs, then the grant recipient must return \$4,000 (20% of \$20,000) to SWCD.

6.0 Changing the Use of Funds

If the Board approves funding for the application, and at a future date the Applicant wishes to modify the intended use of funds, please notify staff as soon as possible. Any such modifications may be disallowed or require Board approval. Otherwise, SWCD requires reimbursement of funds.

7.0 Grant Extension Requests

If the Board approves funding for the application, and completion of the project, study, program, or other grant-funded task has not occurred in 2027, the Applicant must submit a written grant extension request to SWCD Staff describing the progress to date and the projected timeline for completion. At that time, Staff may elect to approve a one-year extension.

Grant extensions are usually limited to one year. However, the Board may approve grant extensions of more than one year; the Applicant may be required to submit a new application, or if funds have already been disbursed, the Board may request that the funds be returned.

8.0 Annual Reporting Requirement

If the Board approves funding for the application, the Applicant must provide a written report and/or supporting documentation of the work accomplished no later than December 31, 2027. This written report will include a detailed accounting of the use of funds including supporting documentation for any expenses incurred, as well as a detailed outline of the total project budget spent. Additional documentation may be requested at the discretion of SWCD. See sample final reports at wwwcd.org. If the Applicant cannot submit the final report by the deadline, they must submit a written request for an extension of time to SWCD staff prior to December 31, 2027, which explains the reporting delay and proposed final submittal date. The Board will not consider future grant requests from Applicants that do not comply with this provision or submit an unacceptable final report.