

SAFER Program Funding

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the SAFER Program?

The SAFER Program is a set of tools, funding sources, and regulatory authorities designed to ensure that one million Californians who currently lack safe drinking water receive safe and affordable drinking water as quickly as possible.

Who is eligible for funding?

Funding is available for water systems that provide drinking water service to small disadvantaged communities of less than 10,000 people and have a median household income (MHI) of less than 80 percent of the statewide MHI. Funds are available now! For more information, visit waterboards.ca.com/safer.

How can water systems apply for funds?

The Financial Assistance Application Submittal Tool (FAAST) allows water systems to apply for grants and loans offered by the State Water Board and other State agencies. State Water Board staff review applications and direct water systems to the appropriate funding program.

Technical assistance is available to help water systems with their applications. To request technical assistance, communities must complete the [Technical Assistance Request Form](#) and email it to DFA-TArequest@waterboards.ca.gov. Access FAAST at faast.waterboards.ca.gov/.

Where does the funding come from?

There are many sources the State Water Board can draw from. Some funding is designated for specific purposes. The Board is focusing on bond funds and revenue from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund. These funds can pay for immediate safe drinking water delivery, planning for communities eligible for new or upgraded drinking water treatment and recommended consolidations:

One-time General Fund Appropriation (Assembly Bill 72)

Assembly Bill 72 amended the Budget Act of 2018 to appropriate \$20 million from the General Fund for safe drinking water programs. \$10 million is allocated to “provide grants or contracts to address urgent drinking water needs in disadvantaged communities, local educational agencies in or serving disadvantaged communities, or nonprofits.” Another \$10 million is designated “for grants or contracts for [Administrators](#) to provide administrative, technical,

operational, or managerial services to a designated water system to support compliance with current drinking water standards.”

Projects eligible for “urgent needs” funding include interim alternate drinking water supplies, emergency improvements, service extensions, consolidations, treatment, and critical operation and maintenance activities that are cost prohibitive considering the population and median household income of the community served by the water system.

Drinking Water State Revolving Fund

The Drinking Water State Revolving Fund provides financial assistance for the planning/design and construction of drinking water infrastructure projects that are needed to achieve or maintain compliance with federal and state drinking water statutes and regulations. This funding comes from federal grants, state sources, and loan repayment.

The Drinking Water State Revolving Fund also provides low-interest loans and grants for planning/design and construction of related projects, such as water sources, water storage facilities, treatment systems, distribution systems, interconnections, consolidations, and waterline extensions. A financially troubled public water system that serves a disadvantaged community may be eligible for principal forgiveness or zero percent interest financing and an extended 30-year repayment term. Funds are meant for projects that provide long-term solutions.

Bond Funding (Proposition 68)

The State Water Board administers \$220 million for safe drinking water and \$74 million for grants for treatment and remediation activities that prevent or reduce the contamination of groundwater that serves as a source of drinking water. \$16 million of the \$74 million is set aside for projects serving severely disadvantaged communities. Funding preference is given to projects that advance the state’s Human Right to Water policy. Funds may be used for non-capital expenditures such as ongoing operations and maintenance.

Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund (Senate Bill 200)

The Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund was established through Senate Bill 200 (SB 200) in 2019. The Fund provides \$130 million per year to develop and implement sustainable solutions for small systems with violations of drinking water standards. The money may be spent on operations and maintenance costs, cost of consolidating with larger system, provision of replacement water and funding for administrators to run the small systems.

For more information on SAFER, visit waterboards.ca.gov/safer.

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