

## **Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience (SAFER) Advisory Group**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

The Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience (SAFER) drinking water program is a set of tools, funding sources, and regulatory authorities designed to meet the goals of safe, accessible, and affordable drinking water for all Californians. The SAFER program includes the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund, which is intended to help water systems provide safe drinking water to communities. The Fund is particularly focused on addressing drinking water needs in disadvantaged and historically disenfranchised communities, and California Native American Tribes.

For additional information on the SAFER program and its Advisory Group, please visit [waterboards.ca.gov/safer](http://waterboards.ca.gov/safer), email [SAFER@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:SAFER@waterboards.ca.gov), or call 916-445-5615.

#### **How does the SAFER Program relate to me and my community?**

In 2016, the State Water Resources Control Board identified the Human Right to Water as a top priority and core value. The Human Right to Water resolution declares that every person in the state has the right to clean, safe, and affordable drinking water. The SAFER program is designed to ensure that all Californians who currently lack safe drinking water receive it as quickly as possible. The SAFER program also aims to support the state's drinking water systems in achieving sustainable and resilient operations. Supporting sustainable resilience is critical for achieving the goals of safe, reliable, and affordable water for all Californians, including California Native American Tribes.

#### **What is the SAFER Advisory Group?**

The SAFER Advisory Group consists of 20 members that represent public water systems, technical assistance providers, local agencies, Tribal water systems, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the public and residents served by community water systems in disadvantaged communities, state small water systems, and domestic wells. The Advisory Group advises the State Water Board on the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund Expenditure Plan and other related SAFER policies.

Advisory Group members are appointed by the Board's Executive Director. Advisory Group members serve two-year rotating terms. This means half of the Advisory Group membership is replaced or reappointed each year. Current Advisory Group members are listed on the SAFER program website.

#### **Who can be a SAFER Advisory Group Member?**

The Advisory Group is open to members of the public; residents served by a community water system in a disadvantaged community, a state small water system, or a domestic well; or representatives from public water systems, technical assistance providers, local agencies, non-governmental agencies, or California Native American Tribes.

## **What would my role or responsibility be as a SAFER Advisory Group Member?**

Advisory Group Members provide input on (1) the development and implementation of the Fund Expenditure Plan and (2) the assessment of how community needs are addressed by SAFER program efforts. This involves reviewing materials between meetings, participation in all Advisory Group meetings, and working with Board staff to provide feedback on strategies used to meet the goals of the SAFER Drinking Water Program.

## **Who is an effective SAFER Advisory Group Member?**

An effective Advisory Group Member is someone who: (1) wants to share their own experiences in bringing drinking water solutions to their community, (2) is dedicated to advancing the Human Right to Water and working with people from different backgrounds and perspectives, (3) wants to share their expertise to support efforts for clean, sustainable drinking water solutions statewide, and (4) has ideas about how to achieve funding equity and environmental justice for all Californians.

## **What if I don't have technical knowledge related to water or Water Board programs?**

The purpose of the Advisory Group is to bring together people with different experiences and expertise to advise the State Water Board on how to spend SAFER funds. Board staff will provide all necessary information and background documents, answer any questions, translate documents, arrange interpretation services for Advisory Group meetings, and advise on any technical questions that arise.

## **Do I need to speak English?**

No. The SAFER drinking water program is dedicated to offering language services in both English, Spanish, and other languages for Advisory Group meetings. Written translation of all written materials are provided and oral interpretation services are available for both in-person and virtual meetings.

Please see [Advisory Group Charter](#) for a comprehensive overview of all responsibilities.

## **What is the expected time commitment for Advisory Group members?**

Advisory Group Members serve two-year terms and meet at least four times annually. Presently, meetings are held virtually due to budgetary constraints and travel restrictions. Members are expected to attend all virtual and in-person meetings. Meeting times can range from four to seven hours (plus travel time if applicable).

Members should plan for at least four hours for pre-meeting material review and dedicate one to two hours monthly for additional SAFER coordination. Beyond Advisory Group meetings, State Water Board staff hold public workshops and webinars providing detailed information on program elements such as the annual Needs Assessment or the SAFER funding process. While optional, they offer crucial background to enhance discussions during Advisory Group meetings.

## **Do Advisory Group Members need internet and video capability?**

Yes. Advisory Group meetings take place on the Zoom platform which requires access to a laptop, tablet, or a smartphone. If Advisory Group members need Wi-Fi hotspots or borrow a tablet, SAFER program staff will work directly with members to explore options and offer technical assistance.

### **How do I apply to be a SAFER Advisory Group Member?**

The application process opens annually in July. Review the membership application package and instructions available on the SAFER webpage linked above. Submit the online application or complete the printable form and email or mail the form to the address listed in the instructions. Applications must be submitted or postmarked by the deadline provided. Appointees will be selected and notified by December of each year.

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