



26-0206 - Clean CA Grant Program - Guidelines_v4

PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Clean CA Program
Summer 2025

**Clean CA Program
Community Cleanup and Employment Pathway Grant Program Guidelines**

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Clean CA Program

Community Cleanup and Employment Pathway Grant Program Guidelines

Introduction

The Community Cleanup and Employment Pathway (CCEP) Grant Program is a signature initiative under the Clean California Program, administered by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). This grant program is designed to support litter abatement and public space beautification efforts on locally owned public right-of-way while creating workforce development opportunities for individuals facing barriers to employment.

Through competitive grants, the program provides funding to local agencies (including federally recognized tribal governments) to conduct targeted litter cleanup and graffiti removal activities, complemented by educational and engagement efforts that foster community pride and long-term maintenance. The program places strong emphasis on serving disadvantaged and underserved communities (as identified in Section 4.1 of grant application template) and encourages local commitment through participation in the Clean California Community designation pledge¹.

A core component of this program is the creation of employment pathways through partnerships with workforce development organizations or use of existing employment development departments. These partnerships will connect justice-impacted individuals, those experiencing homelessness, at-risk youth, and others with meaningful job training and paid transitional employment opportunities focused on litter abatement, landscaping, and environmental stewardship.

Program Objectives

- **Litter and Graffiti Abatement:** Support sustained litter cleanup and graffiti removal on local right-of-way.
- **Workforce Development:** Create transitional employment and training opportunities for vulnerable populations either through partnerships with workforce development organizations or use of existing employment development departments.
- **Equity and Inclusion:** Prioritize disadvantaged communities and support pathways to community self-sufficiency.
- **Sustainable Community Engagement:** Promote public education and anti-littering campaigns. Take the online Clean California Community designation pledge to ensure sustainability and long-term impact.

By integrating cleanup, workforce development, and community engagement, the CCEP Grant Program seeks to create cleaner, safer, and more equitable public spaces throughout California.

¹ <https://cleanca.com/designation/>

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Eligible Entities

For the purposes of the CCEP Grant Program, eligible entities will be defined as:

- **Local Governments** – Cities, counties, and special districts responsible for community services and maintenance.
- **Transit Agencies** – Public transportation agencies with jurisdiction over facilities or right-of-way that intersect with cleanup needs.
- **Tribal Governments** – Federally recognized tribes.
- **Joint Applications** – Partnerships among the above entities, including collaborations with community-based organizations, workforce development boards, educational institutions, or local nonprofits, are encouraged and eligible.

Eligible Expenses

Eligible expenses may include, but are not limited to:

- **Staff Time:** Local agency staff time directly related to proposal delivery is eligible. This includes staff time for developing and administering contracts, program management, and coordination with community-based organizations.
- **Travel Costs:** Reasonable and necessary travel costs that are directly related to proposal implementation (e.g., site visits, stakeholder engagement, workforce coordination) are eligible.
- **Materials and Supplies:** Tools, equipment, safety gear, and cleanup supplies needed for community cleanup activities.
- **Workforce Development Costs:** Training, certification, stipends, or wages directly tied to workforce development opportunities for program participants.
- **Public Outreach and Education:** Costs related to promoting cleanup events, workforce opportunities, and community engagement.

Caltrans District Partnerships

The Caltrans districts possess in-depth knowledge of the local context and unique challenges, making them invaluable enablers to support grant applicants in proposal **identification**, development, and implementation processes. They are encouraged to foster strong partnerships with local agencies to ensure seamless coordination and efficient proposal delivery. By leveraging their expertise and collaborating closely with stakeholders, **districts** can support local agencies in effectively address challenges related to waste management, graffiti, and aesthetic appeal in urban areas, ultimately beautifying public spaces within their districts.

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Proposals

Objectives

The grant proposal is the foundation for securing funding under the CCEP Grant Program. The proposal must demonstrate how the applicant will use grant funding to meet the program's core objectives through locally led, community-driven efforts. Proposals should clearly articulate the public benefit of the proposed activities, particularly in disadvantaged or underserved communities.

Applicants are expected to:

- Identify litter abatement and graffiti removal needs in specific areas of local right-of-way.
- Detail a plan for workforce development, including partnerships with workforce organizations and strategies for engaging vulnerable populations.
- Commit to community engagement strategies and educational outreach that promote long-term cleanliness and civic pride.
- Demonstrate **alignment** with the Clean California Community designation pledge. The pledge is not required to apply for or receive funding.
- Provide a sustainable approach to maintaining the public space improvements achieved through the grant.

Each proposal must be comprehensive, feasible, and results-driven, ensuring that awarded funding leads to measurable environmental, social, and economic impacts in the applicant's community.

Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be submitted by local agencies to their respective Caltrans district coordinators, then evaluated and scored competitively by the Clean CA Program based on the criteria listed below. Applications that score highest across these categories will be prioritized for funding.

1. Community Need and Impact (15 points)

- Demonstrates a clear need for litter abatement and graffiti removal, including information such as description of the history of the area, prior efforts to address the issues and how this grant will make a difference.

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- Identifies underserved or disadvantaged areas where the proposal will be implemented.
- Outlines benefits to public health, safety, environmental quality, and community aesthetics.

2. Workforce Development Strategy (15 points)

- Includes a detailed plan for engaging and employing vulnerable populations.
- Establishes partnerships with workforce development organizations (e.g., BCOE Back 2 Work, Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO), Chrysalis or similar) or leverage existing employment departments.
- Provides evidence of transitional employment (as measured by participants who are able to find long-term employment), training, and pathways to long-term job placement.

3. Community Engagement and Education (15 points)

- Describes plans for community input, public education, and volunteer participation.
- Commits to youth education, anti-littering outreach, **or** (encouraged but not mandatory) participation in the Clean California Community designation program.

4. Long-Term Sustainability and Maintenance (15 points)

- Outlines a long-term plan to fund the maintenance of cleaned and beautified spaces.
- Includes partnerships, volunteer programs, or recurring community events in alignment with the Clean CA community designation pledge.
- Describes infrastructure or policy measures to prevent future littering.

5. Clean California Community Designation Pledge (10 points)

- Applicant has taken or plans to take the Clean California Community pledge.
- Demonstrates commitment to meeting at least 10 of the 15 designation criteria.

6. Proposal Feasibility and Readiness (10 points)

- Provides a detailed implementation schedule.
- Demonstrates capacity to manage the proposal, including procurement, reporting, and oversight.

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7. Matching Funds and Leveraged Resources (10 points)

- Describes how matching funds (cash or in-kind) will support and expand proposal activities.
- Ensures that match contributions are additive and not part of existing baseline cleanup operations.

8. Disadvantaged or Under-served Community (10 points)

Applicants will be required to include supporting documentation (e.g., CalEnviroScreen map outputs, local demographic data, or letters from community organizations) to demonstrate that the proposed project serves a disadvantaged or under-served community. The following criteria will be recognized as indicators of disadvantaged or under-served communities (see grant proposal template for details):

- Median Household Income
- CalEnviroScreen 4.0
- Free or Reduced-Price School Meals
- Healthy Places Index
- Native American Tribal Lands

Application Submissions

- The Clean CA grant program proposal template must be used for submitting the proposal. Ensure that all sections of the template are completed comprehensively and provide sufficient detail to support the evaluation and decision-making process.
- Local agencies, in collaboration with districts, complete the template and submit comprehensive proposals.
- Each proposal submitted for consideration must include a letter of support from the Caltrans district that is submitting the proposal. The letter of support should demonstrate the district's endorsement to the proposal. It will serve as evidence of the district's collaboration and partnership with **local** agencies, ensuring seamless coordination and efficient proposal delivery. The inclusion of the letter will help validate the proposal's feasibility and foster confidence in the successful implementation of the proposal.

Outreach and Partnership

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District-Level Engagement

- Caltrans district staff will serve as on-the-ground liaisons to promote the program locally, identify high-need areas, and encourage eligible applicants to submit proposals.
- District coordinators will collaborate with grant applicants to build partnerships aligned with the program's objectives.

Encouraging Clean California Community Pledges

- As part of the outreach effort, Caltrans will actively promote the Clean California Community designation pledge, encouraging applicants to take the pledge during the grant application process.
- The Clean CA Program will provide technical assistance as needed to help communities understand the benefits of designation and complete the pledge requirements.

Through strategic outreach and strong partnerships, Caltrans will ensure that the grant program reaches a diverse range of communities and delivers equitable opportunities to participate in the Clean California mission.

Selection and Notification

1. Proposal Review and Evaluation:

- Clean CA Program reviews all proposals against qualitative evaluation criteria outlined in the guidelines.
- Proposals are assessed for alignment with waste management, graffiti mitigation, aesthetics and equity objectives.

2. Proposal Selection:

- Clean CA Program selects proposals based on evaluation results and criteria alignment. High-priority proposals that benefit underserved communities are prioritized.

3. Proposal Award Notification:

- Clean CA Program notifies Caltrans districts of the selected proposals by email. Districts inform the corresponding **local** agencies about their grant award. Debriefs will be provided upon request to applicants who were not awarded a grant.

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Schedule

Milestone	Date
Program Launch & Public Outreach Begins	July 1, 2025
Grant Guidelines Finalized & Published	August 15, 2025
Call for Proposals Opens	September 15, 2025
Proposal Submission Deadline	November 1, 2025
Application Review and Scoring	November–December 2025
Award Notifications Issued	January 15, 2026
Grant Agreements Executed	February–March 2026
Proposal Implementation Period Begins	April 1, 2026
Quarterly Progress Check-In (Reporting Due)	April 2026–April 2027
Proposal Implementation Period Ends	April 1, 2027
Final Reports and Closeout Due	November 3, 2027

Funding Mechanism

The funding mechanism for the CCEP **proposals** involves a restricted grant agreement (RGA) between the Caltrans district and the grant recipient (local agency, including federally recognized tribe) which is a legal mechanism that outlines the terms and conditions of the financial commitments for the awarded grant funding . It serves as a formal contract that establishes the roles and responsibilities of each party in the CCEP proposal.

The agreement includes the following elements:

- **Proposal Scope:** The RGA defines the scope of the proposal, detailing the specific improvements and enhancements to be undertaken within the local right-of-way.
- **Funding Commitment:** It outlines the financial contributions, specifying the amount that Caltrans will provide for the proposal and any in-kind contribution from the grant applicant.
- **Timeline and Milestones:** The agreement sets forth a clear timeline for proposal development, implementation, , and completion, including key milestones to be achieved during each phase.
- **Roles and Responsibilities:** It outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Caltrans district and the local agency in the proposal's execution, ensuring seamless coordination and cooperation.

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- **Compliance and Reporting:** The RGA may include requirements for compliance with relevant regulations, reporting on proposal progress, and any necessary documentation and record-keeping.
- **Dispute Resolution:** In the event of any disputes or disagreements, the RGA may outline a mechanism for resolving issues between the Caltrans district and the local agency.

Matching Funds / In-Kind Contributions

The CCEP Grant Program is designed to reduce financial barriers for local agencies, nonprofits, and community-based organizations. As such, no cash match requirement is imposed on applicants. However, applicants are encouraged to identify and document in-kind contributions and other non-state resources that will help maximize the impact of state funds.

Eligible In-Kind Contributions may include:

- Staff time dedicated to project planning, implementation, or coordination.
- Volunteer labor associated with cleanup events, outreach, or community engagement.
- Donated materials or equipment used directly in cleanup or beautification activities.
- Facilities and meeting space contributed for trainings, workforce activities, or project planning.
- Complementary programs or services provided by partner agencies or organizations that directly support grant objectives.

Program Expectations:

- In-kind contributions are not required to apply for or receive funding.
- Applicants who provide in-kind support should quantify contributions where possible (e.g., estimated dollar value of staff time, equipment, or materials).
- In-kind contributions will be considered during proposal evaluation as evidence of community commitment, partnership strength, and project sustainability.
- Documentation of in-kind contributions should be included in the proposal budget narrative at the time of application and reported during proposal implementation.

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Funding Disbursement

Grant awards will be issued as reimbursable agreements, not lump sum payments.

- **Reimbursable Basis:** Grantees will be required to incur and document eligible expenses up front. Caltrans will then reimburse those expenses upon submission of proper invoices and supporting documentation.
- **Invoicing:** Invoices must include receipts, staff time records, or other documentation demonstrating that expenses are consistent with approved Caltrans Division of Local Assistance guidelines/template (Form LAP 5-A).
- **Payment Timeline:** Reimbursements will generally be processed within 45 days of receipt of a complete and accurate invoice package.
- **Advance Payments:** No advance or upfront lump sum disbursements will be provided under this program.

Performance Metrics

To ensure accountability and evaluate success, all grantees are required to track and report on key performance metrics aligned with the program's goals. These metrics will be tracked by grantees on templates provided by Caltrans to help measure the environmental, economic, and social impact of funded activities.

Environmental Impact Metrics

- Volume of litter and debris removed (in cubic yards or pounds with supporting documentation, e.g. weight/dump tickets and before/after photos)
- Square footage of graffiti abated (before/after photos)
- Number of litter cleanup events conducted (event attendance sheets and/or event flyers)
- Number of hard-to-recycle or bulky item collection events held (event attendance sheets and/or event flyers)

Workforce Development Metrics

- Number of individuals employed through workforce programs (with supporting documentation of individuals/crews employed, e.g. payroll logs)

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- Hours of paid work experience and job training provided (with supporting documentation of individuals paid and training provided, e.g. payroll logs)
- Demographics of workforce participants (e.g., justice-involved, unhoused, at-risk youth)
- Number and percentage of participants securing long-term employment post-program

Community Engagement Metrics

- Number of community volunteers engaged (attendance sheets)
- Number of public outreach events or education campaigns implemented (event flyers / attendance sheets)
- Clean California Community pledge status and progress toward meeting designation criteria
- Number of community partnerships established (e.g., schools, businesses, nonprofits)

Sustainability and Maintenance Metrics

- Number of anti-litter infrastructure elements installed (e.g., bins, signage with supporting documentation, e.g. before/after photos)
- Planned frequency of cleanup and maintenance activities post-grant implementation
- Plan for ongoing community stewardship and long-term litter prevention practices post-grant implementation

Grantees will submit quarterly progress reports and a final close-out report at the end of the implementation period. These reports will summarize accomplishments, challenges, lessons learned, and include supporting documentation such as photographs, volunteer logs, and workforce data.

Clean CA Roles/Responsibilities

- **Program Management:** Responsible for overall program management and coordination of CCEP proposals statewide. Ensure that proposals align with the CalSTA objectives on climate action and meet the program's guidelines and priorities.

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- **Proposal Selection:** Select proposals based on factors such as recognizing underserved communities, high litter areas known challenges for waste management, graffiti, and lack of aesthetic appeal in urbanized districts and local agencies which align with CCEP Program objectives.
- **Proposal Oversight:** Provide oversight and guidance throughout the proposal lifecycle. Review proposals, assess their feasibility and alignment with program objectives, and ensure that the proposals adhere to the guidelines and timelines.
- **Technical Assistance:** Provide technical assistance to grant applicants and recipients during the proposal planning and implementation phases. Provide expertise and support in areas such as graffiti abatement, employment pathways, litter abatement, beautification, , and climate action.
- **Budget Management:** Responsible for overseeing the allocation and management of funds for CCEP proposals. Ensure that budgetary requirements are met and that funds are appropriately allocated to prioritize high-visibility proposals with an urgency to be delivered within their respective districts.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Monitor proposal progress, track milestones, and evaluate the effectiveness of implemented enhancements. Assess the impact of CCEP **proposals on** improving waste management practices, reducing graffiti, and enhancing the aesthetic appeal of local areas .
- **Quarterly Reporting and Documentation:** Maintain accurate records of proposal activities, including proposals, RGAs, progress reports, and proposal outcomes. Prepare periodic reports to communicate proposal status, achievements, and challenges to Caltrans leadership.

District Roles

Partnership Identification

- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Engage with local stakeholders, such as city officials, local agency representatives, community organizations, and advocacy groups, to foster partnerships and collaborations.

Project Management and Oversight

- **Project Implementation:** Monitor and facilitate the implementation of proposals according to the defined scope of work, schedule, and milestones.
- **Communication and Coordination:** Maintain regular communication and coordination with partner organizations to address any issues, provide guidance, and track progress.

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- **Performance Evaluation:** Conduct periodic evaluations to assess project performance, identify any necessary adjustments, and ensure adherence to objectives and quality standards.

Reporting and Documentation

- **Progress Updates:** Maintain regular communication with the Clean CA Program on project status, achievements, challenges, and any adjustments made to the scope of work or schedule.
- **Documentation Retention:** Ensure proper documentation of all agreements, communication records, project plans, and reports for record-keeping and future reference.
- **Performance Monitoring:** Monitor the progress and performance of projects to ensure the allocated funds are being effectively utilized.
- **Reporting:** Require regular reporting from local/transit agencies on the implementation and outcomes of the funded projects, including progress updates and evaluation results.
- **Data Collection:** Coordinate with partners to collect relevant project data, metrics, and deliverables.

Invoice Verification (Reimbursement)

- **Ensure Compliance with RGA:** Confirm that submitted invoices align with the terms and conditions outlined in the RGA.
- **Validate Eligible Expenditures:** Review costs to ensure they are allowable under program guidelines, e.g., litter abatement, beautification, and employment pathway activities.
- **Confirm Completion of Work:** Verify that the work claimed in the invoice has been completed as described, including site visits or photographic documentation if required.
- **Check Supporting Documentation:** Ensure that all required backup materials (e.g., receipts, timesheets, contractor invoices) are included and accurate.
- **Monitor Project Progress:** Track milestones and deliverables to confirm that the project is on schedule and consistent with the approved scope.
- **Coordinate with Local Agencies:** Communicate with grantees to resolve discrepancies, request missing documentation, or clarify unclear charges.

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- **Approve for Reimbursement:** Once verified, inform the Clean California Program to proceed with payment processing by Caltrans Accounting.
- **Report and Escalate Issues:** Flag any non-compliance, ineligible costs, or incomplete work for further review and potential corrective action.

Project Close-out Verification

- **Review Final Deliverables:** Confirm that all project components were completed as outlined in the original grant scope and agreement.
- **Verify Documentation Accuracy:** Ensure the closeout report includes complete and accurate records, e.g. before/after photos, receipts, payroll logs, and performance metrics.
- **Confirm Use of Funds:** Check that all expenditures align with approved budget categories and Clean CA eligibility requirements.
- **Assess Community Impact:** Evaluate whether the project met its stated goals (e.g., litter reduction, beautification, job creation) and delivered measurable benefits.

Stakeholder Engagement

- **Community Outreach:** Engage with local communities to provide updates on project progress, gather feedback, and address any concerns or inquiries related to the urbanized transit projects.
- **Public Awareness:** Promote the projects and their benefits to raise public awareness of their benefits, climate action goals, and improvements in active transportation, micro-mobility, and transit station aesthetics.

Grant Recipient Responsibilities

RGA Development

- **Scope of Work:** Collaborate with Caltrans district coordinator to define the scope of work for each proposal, including the specific activities, objectives, and desired outcomes.
- **Schedule and Milestones:** Work with Caltrans district coordinator to establish a comprehensive schedule with realistic milestones to ensure completion of all proposals. The schedule should consider proposal complexity, resource availability, and potential challenges that may arise during implementation.
- **Resource Planning:** Determine the necessary resources, including funding, personnel, equipment, and materials, required to execute the proposals successfully.

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- Legal and Administrative Considerations: Ensure that all RGAs and **cooperative agreements** comply with Caltrans legal requirements and administrative procedures.

Proposal Management and Oversight

- Proposal Implementation: Monitor and facilitate the implementation of proposals according to the defined scope of work, schedule, and milestones.
- Communication and Coordination: Maintain regular communication and coordination with Caltrans district coordinator to address any issues, provide guidance, and track progress.
- Performance Evaluation: Conduct periodic evaluations to assess proposal performance, identify any necessary adjustments, and ensure adherence to objectives and quality standards.

Reporting and Documentation

- Progress Updates: Maintain regular communication with the Caltrans district coordinator and Clean CA Program on proposal status, achievements, challenges, and any adjustments made to the scope of work or schedule.
- Documentation Retention: Ensure proper documentation of all agreements, communication records, proposal plans, and reports for record-keeping and future reference.
- Performance Monitoring: Monitor the progress and performance of proposals to ensure the allocated funds are being effectively utilized.
- Quarterly Reporting: Complete quarterly reporting on the implementation and outcomes of the funded proposals, including progress updates and evaluation results.
- Data Collection: Collect relevant proposal data, metrics, and deliverables.

Final Vouchering and Project Close-out

- **Submit Final Documentation:** Provide a comprehensive close-out report detailing completed work, expenditures, and outcomes.
- **Include Proof of Completion:** Attach visual evidence (e.g., before/after photos), final deliverables, and any required certifications to demonstrate project completion.
- **Provide Financial Reconciliation:** Submit a final invoice with itemized costs and supporting documentation to reconcile total grant expenditures.

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- **Address Scope and Budget Alignment:** Confirm that all activities and costs align with the approved project scope and budget in the RGA.
- **Respond to Caltrans Requests:** Be prepared to clarify, revise, or supplement the report if requested by Caltrans District Coordinators.
- **Submit Final Voucher Request:** Package the close-out report with the final payment request for review and approval by Caltrans.

Stakeholder Engagement

- **Community Outreach:** Engage with local communities to provide updates on proposal progress, gather feedback, and address any concerns or inquiries related to the urbanized CCEP proposals.
- **Public Awareness:** Promote the proposals and their benefits to raise public awareness of their benefits, climate action goals, and improvements in graffiti abatement, employment pathways, litter abatement, and local area aesthetics.

In addition, applicants are encouraged to include:

- **Community education campaigns** that highlight the impacts of litter, encourage behavior change, and promote responsible waste disposal.
- **Engagement strategies** such as school partnerships, volunteer events, and youth training that build long-term stewardship.
- **Collaboration with local businesses** to reduce litter at the source (e.g., convenience stores, fast food outlets, or transit hubs).