

Building the Implementation Pathway for Scalable Landscape Transformation Outreach and Technical Assistance

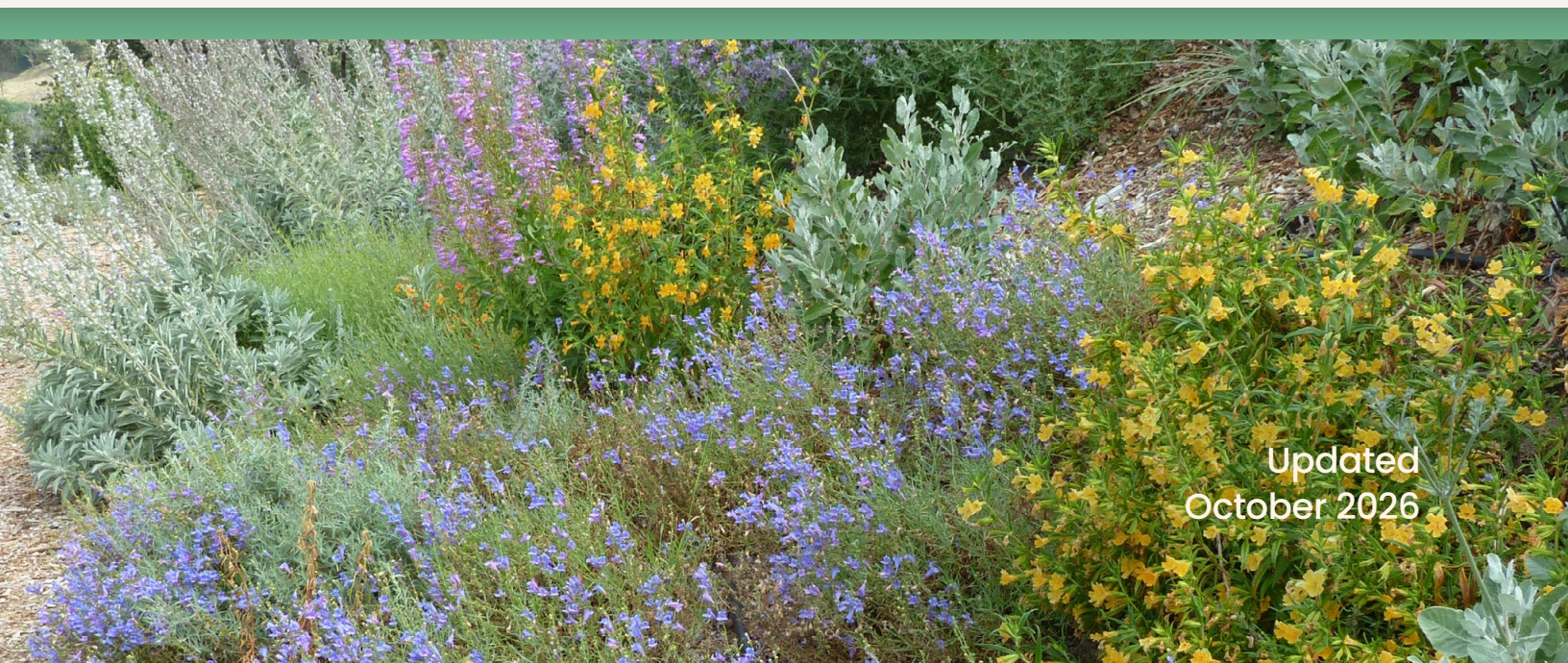


CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF
WATER RESOURCES

Case Study: Approaches for Urban and Rural Areas

**A Practical Case Study for
Water Agency Staff Exploring Direct Install
& Landscape Transformation Programs**

Developed by



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Building the Implementation Pathway for Scalable Landscape Transformation Outreach and Technical Assistance

Case Study: Approaches for Urban and Rural Areas

A practical case study for water agency staff exploring direct install and landscape transformation programs

Developed by California Water Efficiency Partnership and Woodard & Curran
with support from the California Department of Water Resources

October 2026

Acknowledgments

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This project was made possible through funding provided by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), whose support helps advance scalable turf transformation programs and provides practical resources for California water agencies.

The findings and recommendations presented in this case study were informed through collaborative workshops with representatives from GRID Alternatives, SoCalGas, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, Indio Water Authority, Daily Acts, Surfrider Foundation, and Watershed Progressive. These findings are also based on individual conversations held with representatives of Daily Acts and Watershed Progressive, who provided invaluable insights and reviewed drafts of the case study.

The collective expertise and willingness of these organizations and water professionals to share both successes and challenges made this resource possible. CalWEP sincerely thanks everyone who contributed their time, insights, and experience to help strengthen board engagement efforts across California.

Cover image photographed by Carol Bornstein. Penstemon, Monkeyflower, and Sages add whimsy and color to this low-water chaparral garden in Santa Barbara. Landscaping by Carol Bornstein..

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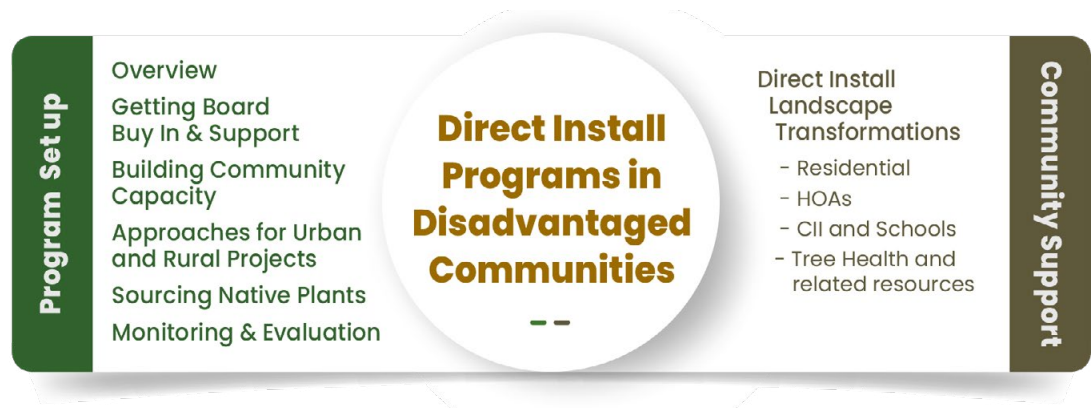
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Direct Install and Landscape Transformation (DI / LT) Series

This case study is part of a California Water Efficiency Partnership (CalWEP) series on Direct Install and Landscape Transformation (DI / LT) programs that explore the elements required to successfully design, implement, and scale these efforts across California. Each case study in the series is intended to stand on its own, while also contributing to a broader picture of how DI / LT programs can be designed, delivered, and scaled across California. Together, these case studies draw on insights gathered through surveys, interviews, and meetings with practitioners who have successfully implemented these programs across diverse contexts. Across the series, readers will find practical guidance, lessons learned, common challenges, and actionable recommendations, supported by real-world examples, to inform the development and refinement of their own direct installation programs.

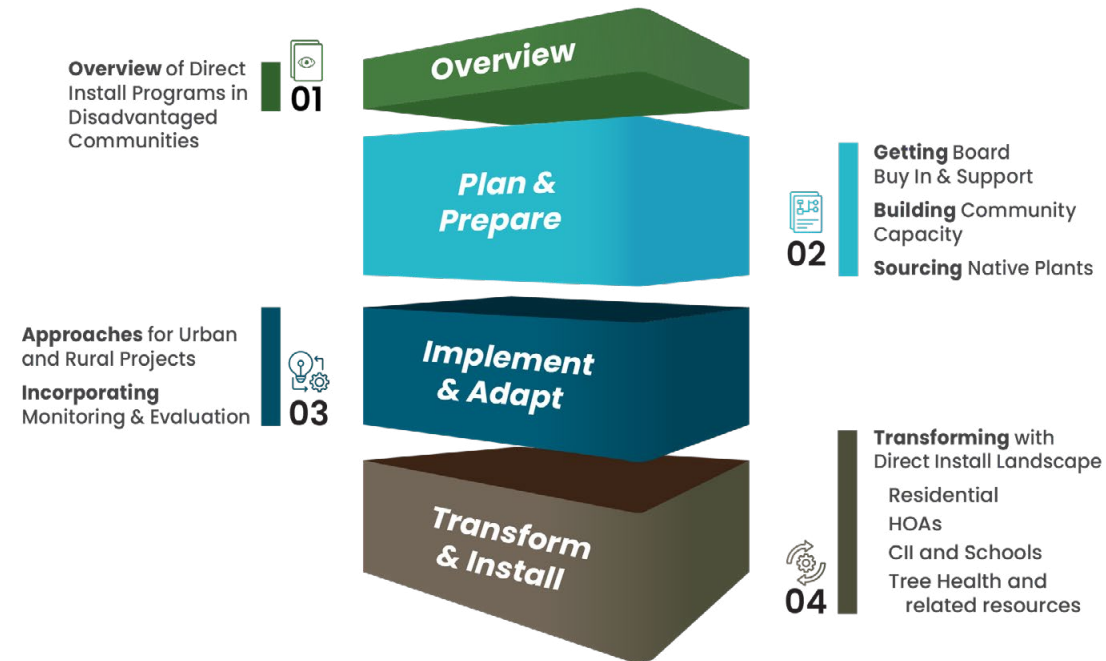
Other case studies in this series include:



As illustrated in the graphic, a successful direct installation turf replacement program follows a lifecycle that extends well beyond the landscape installation itself. Lasting success begins by building a strong foundation through planning and preparation, including securing organizational support, engaging communities, building local capacity, selecting appropriate native plants, tailoring approaches to local conditions, and establishing monitoring and evaluation processes. These foundational elements enable successful implementation of direct installation projects across residential, HOA, commercial, institutional, and school landscapes while allowing programs to adapt based on lessons learned and participant feedback. By progressing from planning and preparation to

implementation and adaptation, and ultimately to sustaining and growing successful landscapes, agencies can transform individual projects into resilient, water-efficient spaces that create lasting environmental, community, and water conservation benefits.

How to Develop a Direct Turf Install Program



The Thriving Communities graphic illustrates that successful direct installation turf replacement programs are not individual projects—they are interconnected improvement processes. Programs begin by listening, engaging, and planning, then move into implementation while adapting to lessons learned from participants, partners, and on-the-ground experience. Those insights strengthen future outreach, program design, plant selection, maintenance practices, and evaluation efforts, creating a cycle of continuous refinement. By regularly evaluating outcomes and applying those lessons to the next generation of projects, agencies can build stronger programs, achieve more resilient landscapes, and multiply their long-term community and water conservation impacts.

Every completed project becomes the foundation for a stronger, more effective program—creating a continuous cycle of learning, adaptation, and lasting community impact.



Executive Summary

This case study summarizes how direct-installation turf removal and landscape transformation programs can be designed and delivered effectively in both urban and rural settings. Direct-install models reduce common participation barriers by lowering or eliminating upfront costs and administrative complexity for participants, and by providing design support, contractor installation, and streamlined eligibility and verification. The guidance in this case study is informed by California Water Efficiency Partnership (CalWEP) engagement workshops conducted in March–April 2026 and follow-up discussions with water agencies and implementation partners across California.

Community characteristics strongly influence program design and implementation. Urban settings typically offer advantages such as reliable internet access which allows for broader program marketing options including social media and other web-based marketing, stronger connections to municipal water and wastewater systems, and greater contractor availability. Property sizes tend to be more standardized in urban areas as well offering the option of standardized design templates. Rural settings may require different approaches due to limited connectivity, reliance on private wells, longer travel distances, and fewer local contractors. Building trust through local partners and using more direct, relationship-based outreach are often essential, along with flexible program design that accommodates larger and more variable parcel sizes.

Overall, direct-installation turf removal programs are most successful when they are not treated as one-size-fits-all. To maximize success, implementing entities should proactively identify likely barriers to participation and tailor outreach, program design, procurement, and monitoring to local conditions. The sections that follow provide considerations and strategies to help agencies and partners develop equitable, implementable, and community-responsive direct-install programs.

Key Takeaways

- Direct-install models can increase participation by reducing upfront costs, simplifying administration, and providing end-to-end implementation support.
- Urban area can often leverage municipal customer data, online outreach, and standardized designs in addition to greater contractor availability, but have smaller property sizes and contend with more regulations.
- Rural areas generally have larger property sizes and less regulations allowing for more creative landscaping features. Rural areas may require a more direct outreach approach, which should also include Tribal outreach when near Tribal lands, and consider reduced capacity and availability for contractors.
- Partnering with trusted community organizations is critical in both contexts, and especially important where trust in agencies is limited.



1. How to Use this Case Study

This case study is part of a CalWEP series focused on Direct-Installation Turf Removal and Landscape Transformation programs. This case study focuses on how community characteristics shape the implementation of programs specifically in urban and rural settings. For the purposes of this case study, United States Census Bureau's definitions are applied to classify geographic areas. An urban area is defined as a densely settled core of census blocks with a housing unit density of 425 units per square mile and encompass at least 2,000 housing units or have a population of at least 5,000. Rural areas encompass all population, housing, and territory not included within an urban area.

This case study is intended for:

- **Conservation and water efficiency staff**
- **Program managers and planners**
- **Consultants and partners who support agencies in developing and implementing programs**

This case study provides an explanation of how urban and rural areas differ in the context of a direct installation program, what barriers to implementation may be presented in each area, and effective strategies to deploy programs successfully. It highlights lessons learned from organizations that have implemented programs in urban and rural settings and provides guidance and tools agencies and organizations can use to navigate a successful program. Guidance provided in the case study is based on real-world experiences shared through CalWEP engagement workshops and discussions with implementing agencies. Participants in the CalWEP engagement workshops and the community contexts each worked in are included in Figure 1 on the following page. Additional information on each of the participating organizations and their programs is included in [Appendix A](#).

Figure 1. CalWEP Direct Install Turf Removal Engagement Workshop Participants

CalWEP Direct Install Turf Removal Engagement Workshop 1	CalWEP Direct Install Turf Removal Engagement Workshop 2
• Daily Acts – Urban • GRID Alternatives – Urban/Rural • Indio Water Authority – Urban • Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) – Urban • SoCalGas – Urban/Rural • Watershed Progressive – Urban/Rural	• Daily Acts – Urban • Indio Water Authority – Urban • Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) – Urban • SoCalGas – Urban/Rural • Surfrider Foundation – Urban • Watershed Progressive – Urban/Rural

Agencies are encouraged to use this case study:

- As a reference when developing a direct-installation turf removal program
- As a starting point for initial recruitment strategy
- As a guide during recruitment, using lessons learned from other agencies who have implemented similar programs

Each section was written to stand alone, based on need, therefore, you may see duplicative trends or themes. The sections include the following information:

- 1. Key Considerations in Urban and Rural Areas:** Provides insights on factors to consider when developing a direct-installation turf removal program in urban and rural areas and how the community context affects different aspects of the program.
- 2. Strategies:** Identifies strategies and actions to address key components of direct-installation turf removal program development. Each component of program development includes specific strategies and actions for urban and rural areas.
- 3. Program Highlights:** Presents examples from an urban-focused program (Daily Acts) and a more rural-focused program (Watershed Progressive) on how each program was implemented and how the programs were influenced by the communities served.



2. Introduction

Water use efficiency rebates and incentives have long been an integral part of water agencies' conservation portfolios. Direct-installation turf removal and landscape transformation programs are a key evolution from the traditional rebate-based water conservation approach. During CalWEP engagement workshops and practitioner discussions, water agencies consistently identified direct-installation models as more effective at reducing participation barriers, particularly those related to upfront cost, administrative complexity, and trust in disadvantaged and hard-to-reach communities.

CalWEP held focused workshops with water agencies and implementation partners in March and April 2026 to discuss their experience in developing and implementing direct-installation programs. Participants had experience statewide, including representatives from Indio Water Authority, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, SoCal Gas, Daily Acts, GRID Alternatives, Surfrider Foundation, and Watershed Progressive. These organizations also worked both in urban and rural settings and provided insights on differences and considerations in each area as they worked with their communities. Clear themes throughout both workshops were the need to meet communities where they are and work to remove barriers to participation as much as possible.

CalWEP also held focused individual discussions with partners with experience specifically working in urban and rural areas to further explore the differences in approaches needed for each area. While these conversations revealed some commonalities, there were some marked differences in approaches based on the urban or rural setting the organization worked in and how they each navigated removing barriers and addressing concerns.

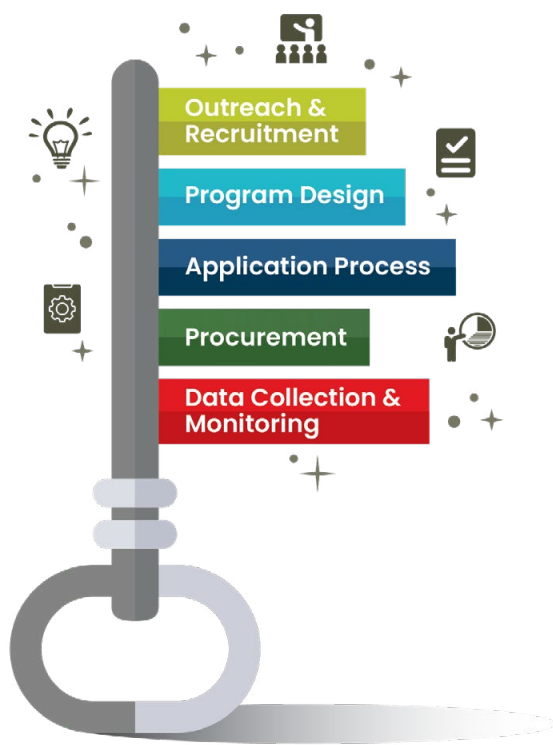
Direct-installation turf removal programs are not and should not be a one-size-fits-all approach. Implementing entities should consider local context and address potential participation barriers proactively. This case study presents key considerations for

implementing entities when developing direct-installation turf removal programs in urban and rural areas and how differences in each area can impact program decisions. Strategies to address potential barriers are detailed and tailored to respond to the localized concerns. Example program approaches are included to provide anecdotal information and demonstrate how other organizations have navigated the unique challenges presented in urban and rural areas.

Direct-installation turf removal programs can be well-designed to maximize water and cost savings, but are only successful through the participation of the community. This case study is intended to guide agencies planning to implement direct-installation programs with insight and considerations based on their community context to investigate early in their program development.

3. Key Considerations in Urban and Rural Areas

Understanding the differences in urban and rural areas is important for successful implementation of direct-installation turf removal programs. These differences will guide development of program elements including outreach, recruitment, data collection, and monitoring. This section will describe urban and rural area characteristics, including population, regulatory considerations, and effective outreach. This section is meant to serve as a general guide to agencies hoping to implement these programs that should be combined with local knowledge and expertise.



Key Considerations for Outreach and Recruitment

Outreach is a fundamental first step of program implementation. Publicizing the program and ensuring that program materials are accessible and easy to understand are vital to the successful launch of the program. There are several important factors that should be considered when developing outreach strategies and materials.

Recruitment is the crucial next step, converting outreach contact to participation. Many of the same factors influence effective recruitment so both are discussed in this section.

Connection to Municipal Systems

Urban areas are generally connected to municipal system for water and wastewater service, which can make finding contact information for potential

participants easier. Implementing organizations can partner with the municipal agency for outreach support, using the agency's website, social media, and any other commonly used outreach methods, a tactic that several workshop participants used when implementing their programs. Water agencies may also be willing to share consumption data by customer, which can help to target particularly high consumption users for the program for outreach. Water consumption data can also help to be a selling point for the program, providing projected water and cost savings compared to current water use.

Residents of rural areas often have limited or no access to municipal systems. Due to this, many residents of rural areas are on privately owned wells for residential water use. Water use from rural residents may not be as well understood without metering data, making it harder to estimate water savings as an outreach and recruitment tactic. There may also not be an established relationship with the residents in rural areas if they are not connected to the municipal system and trust will need to be built and earned through transparent conversations. Implementing entities may be able to contact local groundwater sustainability agencies (GSAs) for well owner contact information. GSAs may also have registered well lists that can be shared.

Internet Access

Internet access will influence outreach strategies for the program. Urban areas typically have reliable internet access allowing for the use of social media or web-based advertising to reach potential participants.

Rural areas are often more remote and disconnected from municipal services, which can often mean unreliable internet access. Direct communication, including mailers or direct phone calls, will need to be employed with these communities, which can be a strain on resources for these programs.

Home Ownership Status

Workshop participants shared that home ownership had an impact on their outreach and recruitment efforts. Home ownership tends to be higher in rural areas, where roughly 74% of households own their home, than in urban areas, where only around 50% of households own their home, so this may be a consideration primarily in urban areas (USAFacts, 2026). Renters may or may not have the ability to make or approve home improvements, especially if they are renting in multi-family property, and will need to consult with the homeowner to get approval for any direct-installation programs.

Program Design

Direct-installation turf removal programs should be designed to best fit the needs of the community and meet the objectives of the implementing agency. The funding source may influence some components of program design and introduce additional layers of regulatory compliance. Property size can play a role in program design decisions, as can the plants available to be included as part of the turf removal. This section details these common factors that are important to consider when designing effective direct-installation turf removal programs. More information on program design can be found in additional case studies developed by CalWEP as part of this program.

Funding Requirements

Direct-installation turf removal programs are often grant funded, which can determine portions of the program design. Requirements for grant funding will often set a minimum amount of turf removed (acres/square feet) or water saved. These requirements may also prioritize particular communities that the funding should benefit, such as focusing on disadvantaged communities (DACs) which are prioritized in some funding programs. The California Department of Water Resources defines disadvantaged communities as those with less than 80% of the statewide median household income (MHI). The MHI for the Census American Communities Survey (ACS) dataset for 2019-2023 is \$96,334, meaning the DAC threshold is \$77,067.

Grant funding requirements may also dictate a maximum or minimum project costs or minimum cost ratios per acre or per million gallons/acre feet of water saved. As detailed below, urban areas may struggle to reach minimum size requirements and will need more creative approaches to meet these requirements.

Property Size

Property size is a key consideration of any program design. Property sizes tend to be smaller in urban areas, which can make reaching the minimums prescribed by the grant requirements tougher. Properties in urban areas also are more similar in size which can make design templates a viable option.

Properties in rural areas can be larger and more variable than in urban areas. This can make it easier to achieve minimum turf removal or water savings goals at one property but makes the use of design templates more difficult as properties can be different in shape and size.

Local Priorities

Direct-installation practitioners shared that local priorities can play a role in program design. In urban areas, there may be goals set by the municipality or water district in urban planning documents, such as master plans or Urban Water Management Plans, that could drive what services or features are offered as part of the direct-installation program. These goals, such as focusing on graywater use as a conservation method, may not always align with features the community desires, but may need to be included and considered when operating within the municipality or district service area.

In rural areas, there may be less structured goals and planning for the area which allows for a wider range of options but less direction from partners. This can allow the community to drive more of the decision making for the program, but may require implementing entities to establish the range of features and services they are willing to and can provide.

Plant Selection and Availability

The plants available to program participants are important considerations of program design. Implementing entities should reach out to local nurseries and ensure there is sufficient plant availability as part of their initial program development. CalWEP has a case study focused on plant nursery supply chain which has more information on plant availability. Workshop participants shared that plant availability sometimes slowed progress of direct-installation projects and advised that implementing agencies consider this early in the process rather than assume that plants will always be readily available.

Participants may have a variety of priorities for what plants are included in their new landscape, including pollinator habitat or groundwater infiltration ability. Programs should also determine whether solely native plants are to be used or if non-native climate-friendly plants can be included.

In urban areas, the range of plants that are viable on the property may be more limited due to size and dependent on local climate. Urban areas may be more focused on neighborhood aesthetics as well and will want more attractive looking plants. Some programs may opt for design templates, which can be helpful in limiting the range of options and guaranteeing plant availability for the program.

Rural areas may have more variety in plants offered given that design templates are less likely to be used. Participants may be less focused on aesthetics and more focused on functional uses like increasing local wildlife habitat or groundwater infiltration, especially for groundwater users. Infiltration is more viable with larger property sizes and the ability to build in features like bioswales.

Regulatory Compliance

Regulatory compliance should be considered as part of the program design. Regulations may affect program eligibility and individual project funding. Prioritizing particular groups, like disadvantaged or low-income customers, for the program with free or low-cost installation can be tricky due to regulations against gift of public funds and using public funds to subsidize one class of customers. Urban areas may also need to pay close attention to any local ordinances, such as the Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (MWELO), to ensure that the program can be carried out within regulatory boundaries. Homeowners associations (HOA) regulations may also impact urban projects, see additional case studies for more information.

While there may be less regulatory restrictions when working within rural areas, implementing entities should consider contacting local Tribes about any projects given the higher likelihood of proximity to Tribal lands or lands with cultural significance.

Maintenance

Long-term maintenance should be considered as part of the program design. It is often not feasible for implementing entities to take full responsibility for long-term maintenance, especially in rural areas. Landscape designs should be either low effort to maintain or include clear instructions for ongoing maintenance. Agencies should provide tools and resources to support long-term maintenance, such as CalWEP's GardenWise CA. GardenWise CA is a free application, developed through the support of the California Department of Water Resources, that will provide seasonal maintenance reminders and tips to care for home and commercial gardens. Programs like Watershed Progressive's Land Resilience Partnership emphasize a "buy-in" process that supports participants and their ability to tend to their newly planted landscapes long-term.

Application Process

The application process should be well-defined and easy to understand to encourage participation. A typical application process may include an initial application, a secondary screen to discuss responses in the application, and a site visit to provide the necessary information for the implementing agency to decide which projects to take on. Program design will have the most impact on the application process, but there are a few other factors to consider when developing application materials and procedures. Based on interviews, there are few functional differences between urban and rural areas in the application process. This section discusses common considerations when developing the application process.

Eligibility

Program eligibility should be clearly communicated to help minimize unnecessary resources spent on ineligible entities. If the program is grant funded, program eligibility may be determined by the funding requirements. Potential funding requirements could include minimum property size or a particular type of property.

Programs in urban areas can align their eligible areas with their service area. Implementing entities, particularly water agencies or those partnered with water agencies, working in rural areas will need to address if well users are eligible for their program or consider approaches to working outside of the water agency's service area.

Household income can also play a role in determining eligibility, particularly if grant funding requirements specifically target low-income or disadvantaged communities. In discussion with a program implementor, income verification can be somewhat sensitive for residents. Developing an income verification method that includes alternative methods can help relieve some of the concern about sharing household income.

Internet Access

Similarly to outreach and recruitment, internet access will affect how materials can be presented to potential participants. Urban users are more likely to have reliable internet access and be more proficient using computers so implementing agencies can use web-based applications. Web-based applications can make application intake and review much easier, with a central database for the participant applications.

Rural areas without reliable internet access may need to have physical applications, provide on-site application support, or apply a more targeted approach to decide on program participants. Spam marketing calls have reduced the likelihood of people answering unknown phone numbers which could necessitate more on-site application support. Older people tend to need more support with web-based programs and rural areas also have a higher proportion of older residents than urban areas (Pew Research, 2018).

Application Support and Follow-Up

Application support and follow-up are important to the success of direct-installation programs. On-site application support can be a key difference between an applicant submitting a successful application or choosing not to apply at all. Using staff to help fill out applications can reduce the need for detailed application review. Application support may be less necessary in urban areas, but could include multilingual staff working with residents who are not fluent in English on applications. In rural areas, on-site application support could help guarantee more applications and may help to bring the program to residents that are less connected due to unreliable internet or cell service.

Follow-up activities could include secondary screens or site visits to help better understand the property and technical feasibility. In urban areas where applications may be submitted by residents that have not been contacted or supported by the implementing entity, secondary screening and site visits may be required to verify information provided. In rural areas, particularly if implementing entities are actively contacting applicants these may not be needed.

Application follow-up should be completed in a timely manner to ensure that applicants remain engaged and interested.

Procurement

Many direct-installation turf removal programs elect to have third-party contractors implement the on-site work. Proper procurement of these contractors is important to the success of the program, ensuring that the contractors are available to complete work efficiently. Implementing agencies should consider regulatory compliance and contractor range when determining their contractors, both of which can differ within the community context that the programs operate within. Urban areas are likely to experience more regulatory restrictions than rural areas, but are likely to have greater access to contractors.

Regulatory Compliance

Following procurement requirements is important for the ongoing success of the program and to ensure that contractors are able to complete work in a timely manner. Some funding programs may have specific procurement procedures that should be followed and some may defer to the City/agency policy. Grant funded programs may have prevailing wages regulations that should be followed and may be challenging for some contractors who do not have experience following State or Federal regulations.

Compliance in urban areas will need to align with the local regulations and careful review of the local procurement policies should be included in any procurement for direct-installation programs.

Rural areas may have slightly less rigorous procurement regulations, but review of the pertinent authority's (City/Town or County) policies should be conducted. Rural areas may need to be especially mindful of local Tribes in the potential project areas given the higher likelihood that the project may occur on or near Tribal lands or areas of cultural significance to Tribes. Some Tribes may work with the Tribal Employment Rights Office (TERO) and may ask that you consult with TERO prior to any contracting.

Contractor Capacity

Contractor capacity is an important factor that can be dependent on location. In urban areas, contractors are generally more available and more local to the community served. These contractors may offer a range of services rather than strictly one aspect of the installation (i.e. irrigation, plant sourcing, etc.). An implementing entity shared that contractors in urban areas are also more likely to have familiarity working with State or Federal grant programs and the ability to comply with the grant requirements. The same entity shared that urban area contractors are better positioned to be paid through reimbursement processes rather than upfront payment than those in rural areas.

Rural areas generally have less contractors available locally. Rural area contractors may be more specialized and are less able to withstand delays in payment. These contractors may also be less familiar with regulatory compliance and may need more support to be able to meet any grant requirements.

Contractors may have a limited geographic range that they operate within which should be considered when selecting a contractor. Range may be less of a concern in urban areas where population density is higher and projects are likely to be in a smaller radius. Contractors are also likely to be more local to the urban areas.

Rural areas may have a wider geographic range of locations, which should be understood when selecting contractors for the program. Some contractors may not be willing to extend their range far enough to reach some of the rural areas. There may be less local contractors available as well and implementing entities should communicate early with potential contractors about the range of travel necessary for the program.

Data Collection and Monitoring

Data collection and monitoring is crucial to track water conservation improvements from the direct-installation turf removal programs over time. Implementing agencies may also want to track additional co-benefits, such as soil health, ambient temperature, or shade coverage, from their programs. While some participants are unlikely to have any issue with project monitoring, some may have sensitivities to how their data is handled. This section details considerations for data collection and monitoring efforts as part of the direct-installation turf removal programs.

Co-Benefit Data Evaluation

Implementing agencies should have a good grasp on what co-benefits are going to be tracked and the feasibility of the measurement of these co-benefits. Co-benefits are benefits in addition to water savings such as include soil health, ambient temperature, or shade coverage added. Some measurements may be more difficult to track based on location.

In urban areas, properties will be a bit more homogenous with minimal variations in property size and soil composition. Soil types are not likely to be varied in any given property which can make it easier to track soil health or soil temperature. Soil health is tied to water quality and increased permeability making it an ideal co-benefit to track.

Tracking co-benefits may be more challenging in rural areas where property sizes can be more varied. Given that properties are likely to be larger, implementing agencies will need to consider that multiple types of soils could exist on the property and soil health can differ throughout the property.

Local Opinion on Monitoring

Monitoring is likely to be unintrusive in urban areas given that readings can be taken from water utility meters to track water savings over time.

In rural areas, particularly if participants are on private wells, there may be more sensitivity to any monitoring efforts. Well users may be less trusting of any data collection efforts, in fear of regulations based on the collected information being imposed on them. Some of the monitoring devices may require WiFi connections that may be unavailable in rural areas.

4. Proven Strategies

This section is intended to outline high-level strategies to address the components of program development in urban and rural communities. These strategies are meant to be a starting point for program development and should be considered within the specific context of the community the program will serve. This section also includes suggested actions to provide more concrete initial activity to begin program design. These strategies and suggested actions should not be considered a comprehensive road map to a successful direct-installation turf removal program, but a good foundation for program development. Implementing entities should develop a strong understanding of the community they intend to serve and work to develop relationships to best understand how to shape the program to the needs of the community. Each program will have unique nuances and strategies should be adjusted to address them.





Outreach and Recruitment

Outreach and recruitment are the key first steps in implementing a direct-installation program. Implementing entities should factor in municipal system connection, internet access, and home ownership status when tailoring messaging and recruitment strategies to the community context. Establishing a good relationship with community groups is a sound strategy in both urban and rural areas. The sections below detail additional strategies that can support a more successful effort.

Urban Strategies for Outreach and Recruitment

Working with trusted community organizations that have an existing relationship with the community was commonly cited as an effective strategy amongst the agencies that participated in the engagement workshops. Community organizations can also help to share information on the program and can help introduce implementing agencies to interested parties. It is important to be respectful of the relationships that community organizations have with their communities. Including community organizations as part of the implementing project team can be a good way to ensure respectful engagement.

With the advantage of widespread internet access, programs centered in urban areas have a variety of outreach methods that can be employed. The use of social media advertisement to go along with traditional methods of outreach (mailers, emails to customer base, newsletters, etc.) can help amplify the program and make it more recognizable. Consistently seeing repeated advertisement and information on the program can help to convince potential participants to learn more. Urban areas also have the advantage of word-of-mouth advertising and door-to-door outreach with closer proximity to neighbors and public spaces. Projects completed in higher visibility areas can incentivize others in the community to participate in the program.

Reviewing water consumption data may also be helpful in locating the highest outdoor water users and implementing targeted outreach methods to them. Targeted outreach can include phone calls, mailers, or in-person outreach to the property.

Suggested Actions:

- Foster relationships with local community organizations and/or community leaders
- Develop internet-based advertisements and social media outreach strategy
- Review water consumption data (if available) for higher water consumption properties

Rural Strategies for Outreach and Recruitment

Tapping into trusted community organizations is also the most useful outreach and recruitment strategy for rural areas. As previously mentioned, residents in rural areas that are not connected to the municipal system may not be familiar with the utility or agency implementing the program. The implementing agency will need to establish trust with the community and partnering with a local community organization can help to make this easier. Using already trusted messengers and asking for time during community meetings where people are already gathered are good strategies to reach rural communities.

Demonstration projects are an effective strategy for wider adoption of the direct-installation program, a strategy implemented by Watershed Progressive in their Land Resilience Partnership. Implementing entities should meet with the community to identify ideal locations for a demonstration site. Demonstration sites could be a community leader's property or public spaces like community parks.

Targeted direct communication may be an effective strategy. If available, water consumption data for parcels in the rural area can be reviewed to find the users with the highest outdoor water use. Implementing entities should also reach out to local GSAs to ask for well owner contact information and any other sharable and pertinent well information. Outreach resources like direct mailers, door-to-door outreach, or phone calls can be focused on the users that will be most impactful.

Suggested Actions:

- Foster relationships with local community organizations and/or community leaders
- Ask local community organizations about community gathering spaces and if presentations can be provided during these gatherings
- Develop contact list through local organizations and GSA well information (if available)
- Coordinate with community leaders on a demonstration project site



Program Design

Program design can be heavily influenced by the source of funding for the direct-installation turf removal program. The first step in program development should be a thorough review of the funding source requirements. State and Federal funding programs will often include stipulations about what customers should be served and a minimum amount of acreage removed or water saved.

Urban Strategies for Program Design

Since property sizes tend to be smaller in urban areas than rural areas, implementing entities may need to be creative about achieving minimum acreage or water saved in projects.

Bundling multiple smaller properties in close proximity into one larger project can help to meet minimum requirements. Another strategy is the inclusion of larger parcels that can help to offset the smaller parcels to meet overall minimum requirements for the funding program.

Implementing agencies may consider creating design templates for their programs to make implementation easier and help with ensuring plant species are readily available for projects. Consulting with the community on aesthetic preferences and reviewing local ordinances can help to refine the design templates and encourage higher participation in the program.

Urban planning documents can help guide what features should be included as part of the services offered in the program. Planning documents could place some constraints on what features and services are viable in urban areas so implementing entities should review local documents, including master plans, UWMPs, or other relevant urban planning documents.

When deciding on which plants to include, implementing agencies can review the California Native Plants Society's (CNPS) Calscape tool to research native plants and locate nurseries with availability of the plant species. The Water Use Classification of Landscape Species (WUCOLS) database is also a good resource for climate-resilient plants. Local nurseries should be contacted and kept informed of the program to ensure plant availability. Expanding plant selection beyond only native plants will be helpful in keeping a variety of plants available for use in turf removal projects. Plants may need to be sourced from more than one nursery.

Since the implementing entities are likely to be more local to the urban areas, maintenance support during the establishment period for plants may be helpful to increase participation in the program. Maintenance of the landscape should ultimately be handled by the participant, but programs should consider low-effort plants in the design templates to make this easier. Some programs may opt to create a maintenance manual with seasonal instructions on plant care and maintenance of installed features for program participants. Agencies can also direct participants to the Gardenwise CA free mobile application.

Suggested Actions:

- Review Urban Water Management Plans and other relevant water conservation planning documents to ensure alignment with conservation priorities
- Contact local nurseries to inform them about the program and the plant species and estimated quantities that will be needed
- Develop design templates or examples to share with program participants

- Familiarize program staff with the Gardenwise CA application to help introduce the application to participants

Rural Strategies for Program Design

Rural areas are likely to have larger property sizes which can make reaching minimum requirements easier, however landscape design in rural areas will need to be more customized to the individual property than in urban areas due to the varied size and shape of properties. Rural area properties may also have topographical variations such as running streams, forested areas, wildlife habitat, and other ecological features to consider when working on turf removal projects. Implementing entities should review Calscape and WUCOLS for plants that will complement these features and support healthy ecological function.

Larger properties are better candidates for groundwater infiltration as a water conservation method. Including features like bioswales with plants that filter stormwater or runoff in landscape designs can help to increase the overall benefit, especially for areas using individual wells.

Plant species selected for programs in rural areas should be generally easier to maintain as there is less likely to be capacity of the implementing entity to support. Creating a maintenance manual for the participants can help to increase the chances of success for the installed plants and features. It may be helpful to include staff contact information as well in case any questions arise.

Suggested Actions:

- Use Calscape and WUCOLS databases to research optimal and low-maintenance plant species for the area
- Contact nurseries to inform them about the program and the plant species and estimated quantities that will be needed
- Develop maintenance manuals for the property including establishment periods and seasonal maintenance needed for the plants and features



Application Process

A web-based application can make many aspects of the application and review process much easier. Web-based applications can help to ensure a centralized location where all relevant documents can be stored and easily accessible throughout program implementation. Simplifying the application as much as possible will help to encourage more people to apply. Implementing agencies may also consider providing application support and walk through application questions with potential participants. Applications should be provided in multiple languages, if possible, to ensure equitable access.

Urban Strategies for the Application Process

Urban areas should be able to use a fully web-based application process which should make application intake and document management simple. Implementing agencies should create a filing system for applications to ensure easy reference to applications and any associated documents. On-site application support can still be useful to improve application responses and implementing entities should consider the need for translation services.

Program funding sources can play a role in the application process as well by defining eligibility criteria for the program. This may limit the available candidate pool, but creative approaches can be applied by bundling projects to make projects eligible. If requirements include participant income limits, implementing entities can use alternate resources to prove income status through other programs including SNAP participation or proof of low-income utility billing rather than asking for income information directly. DWR also has an online mapping tool using Census data that can help determine eligibility.

Secondary screening and site visits should be conducted to ensure eligibility and site viability. Evaluation during the screening and site visits will vary from program to program but generally should note any important eligibility requirements, property measurements, and participant and program priorities.

Suggested Actions:

- **Establish clear eligibility criteria for the program**
 - Criteria should at least include minimum acreage of turf removed
 - If grant-funded, conduct thorough review of grant requirements and ensure requirements are included in the eligibility criteria for the program
- **Develop filing system for applications and projects (file nomenclature, folder structure, etc.)**
- **Dedicate staff to application support services, including on-site application support and translation**
- **Develop secondary screening protocol, including expected turnaround times, screening call scripts, and eligibility checklists**

Rural Strategies for the Application Process

Rural areas may have less reliable internet service and providing on-site application support is a highly effective strategy to encourage participation. Paper applications may be preferred in rural areas rather than web-based applications. Implementing entities should still enter paper applications into a centralized database to ensure documents can be easily accessed and referenced as needed. Again, applications should be provided in multiple languages to ensure equitable access to the program.

Similarly to urban areas, program funding source will likely influence eligibility for the program. Providing multiple methods to prove income levels will be helpful in navigating eligibility requirements in rural areas as well.

Secondary screening and site visits may be less necessary, especially if the programs are more targeted for certain locations. Protocols and evaluation should still be developed in the case that non-targeted applications are received.

Suggested Actions:

- **Establish clear eligibility criteria for the program**
 - Criteria should at least include minimum acreage of turf removed
 - If grant-funded, conduct thorough review of grant requirements and ensure requirements are included in the eligibility criteria for the program
- **Develop filing system for applications and projects (file nomenclature, folder structure, etc.)**
- **Dedicate staff to application support services, including on-site application support and translation**



Procurement

Hiring third party contractors to implement the turf removal projects is likely to be the most effective option unless entities have landscaping staff. Procurement and contracting for rural vs. urban sites require varied approaches.

Urban Strategies for Procurement

Implementing entities in urban areas should conduct a thorough review of their own procurement policies and procedures, as well as those of the municipality in which work will occur. Some policies may allow for skipping bid processes if below a certain overall contract total, which can help to speed up the process and may be a good benchmark for maximum project cost. If the program is grant-funded, implementing entities should review grant requirements for procurement. Some funding programs require more action from potential contractors, including compliance with prevailing wage policies.

There is often little variance in the types of work required for projects in urban areas developing standard contracts for contractors can help to streamline the contracting process. It may be helpful to have a bench of contractors available for projects as well to avoid any long delays or capacity issues if multiple projects are in process at the same time.

Suggested Actions:

- **Review all relevant procurement policies and procedures to the project site**
- **Develop standard contract language and scope of work**

Rural Strategies for Procurement

Rural areas may have less additional restrictions on top of their own policies in procurement of contractors, but implementing entities should still conduct thorough review of all relevant procurement policies and procedures, including those of the funding source. Contractors in rural areas may have less capacity to meet certain requirements and may require additional assistance to navigate compliance. Rural areas are more likely to include Tribal land or lands of cultural significance to Tribes so early communication with the local Tribe and TERO (if the Tribe is a partner with TERO) is recommended to ensure respectful engagement and avoid any conflicts.

Implementing entities should make the geographic range a contractor may need to be available for very clear and build this into contracting discussion. Local contractors are generally preferable to help support the local community and economy but may be less available depending on the rural area. Building a bench of contractors for projects will be useful in rural areas as well, since contractors may be more specialized and teams of contractors may need to be built to carry out the work. Local contractors may also have less experience with Federal or State compliance requirements, such as prevailing wage determinations, so building in additional staff support to assist contractors with these requirements will be helpful in ensuring contractors are in compliance.

Suggested Actions:

- Review all relevant procurement policies and procedures to the project site, including reaching out to local Tribes about the project
- Establish clear geographic range for the program and communicate this clearly with potential contractors
- Ensure staff are available to contractors to support compliance with Federal or State requirements



Data Collection and Monitoring

Implementing entities should identify all measurement tools needed to collect data and monitor project success over time early. Introducing any monitoring equipment being installed to the participants is recommended to ensure that they are comfortable with what is being collected and how the information is used.

Urban Strategies for Data Collection and Monitoring

It is likely to be easier to use monitoring equipment that runs off Wi-Fi or Bluetooth connections in urban areas, which will allow for real-time monitoring and data analysis, if needed. Developing a periodic report or web dashboard with real-time water conservation

stats and cost savings using this data can help to engage participants and build trust with the implementing agency. These reports may also be useful program marketing tools.

Implementing entities should develop a data management plan and policy to define how information is used, who can access the information, and when information is destroyed. When possible, avoid using personally identifiable information to ensure privacy is maintained.

Suggested Actions:

- Determine what data points will be monitored and how frequently data will be needed
- Use monitoring devices such as meters, landscape monitors, and sensors that provide real-time data
- Develop a data management plan for all data collected through the program

Rural Strategies for Data Collection and Monitoring

Residents in rural areas may have more sensitivity to monitoring stemming from a fear of new regulations being imposed on them based on the information collected. Allowing for self-reporting of water data rather than having staff read meters or well levels or installing new flow monitors may be helpful to assuage these concerns. Developing an algorithm or calculation based on GIS data of the property could also help to estimate water savings and other co-benefits without the need to install new monitoring equipment or have staff return to the site.

Suggested Actions:

- Determine what data points will be monitored and how frequently data will be needed
- Use solar-powered monitoring devices or similar lower connectivity devices to collect data from projects
- Develop water conservation estimation tools (i.e. algorithms or indicators) that can be supported with self-reported data

5. Real Agency Examples

This section provides program descriptions and approaches for an urban area direct-installation program and a rural area direct-installation program. These program highlights provide experiential insight and advice from two practitioners operating in each community context. While both programs operated from a similar program foundation, each program adapted to meet the needs and priorities of the communities served. Other programs contributed to this study including GRID, SoCalGas and LADWP. Information on those programs can be found in additional CalWEP Case Studies and [Appendix A](#).

Urban Program Highlight:



Daily Acts and Sonoma County Partners Land Resilience Partnership (LRP) Program

The Land Resilience Partnership (LRP) is a community-based, direct-install landscape transformation initiative led by Daily Acts in partnership with local governments, nonprofit organizations, and workforce development partners in Sonoma County, with a focus on Disadvantaged Communities (DACs) in the Petaluma River Watershed. The program was initially developed by Watershed Progressive and partner collaborators such as the Tuolumne and Ventura Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs), is designed to reduce outdoor water use, improve climate resilience, and deliver co-benefits such as flood mitigation, habitat creation, and urban shade through no- or low-cost landscape and water-saving installations.



Project Description

LRP was implemented as a direct-install model to address barriers commonly associated with rebate-based conservation programs, including upfront costs, technical complexity, and limited contractor access. Through this approach, participating households and community

sites received hands-on technical support, multi-benefit design services, and installation assistance, rather than being required to manage projects independently.

Daily Acts piloted the Land Resilience Partnership in Sonoma County through a Department of Water Resources–funded Urban and Multibenefit Drought Relief grant, delivering a combination of site assessments, concept designs, and direct installations between 2023 and 2025. Program services included:

- Rainwater harvesting systems
- Rain gardens and bioswales
- Greywater reuse systems
- Lawn conversions via sheet mulching
- Climate-appropriate plantings, including native plants and habitat-providing trees

Participating sites included single-family homes, schools, parks, and other community spaces, with a significant share located in DAC areas prioritized for climate and water vulnerability.

Key features of the program included:

- Free site assessments and concept designs for all participants
- Direct installation of selected projects, led by Daily Acts and partners
- Labor costs fully covered by grant funding
- Materials provided on an income-based sliding scale, with some participants qualifying for full material cost coverage



Urban Areas Approach

Daily Acts installed 62 projects through the Land Resilience Partnership, resulting in 1.9 million gallons of water saved. Daily Acts worked with a variety of project sites, including residences, schools, and parks mostly in the City of Petaluma. The City of Petaluma is considered an urban area with a population of around 60,000 within 14.52 square miles.

Daily Acts used a broad variety of outreach methods to ensure wide reach throughout the community. Daily Acts connected with local community groups to share resources and information about the program, which was then shared with other residents. Daily Acts also sent out mailers to residents and invested in social media marketing, which helped to drive more interest as Daily Acts received a lot of responses in applications that noted Facebook or Instagram as the source they learned about the program. Word-of-mouth within the community also helped to increase interest and participation in the program. One neighborhood had a series of five homes receive graywater installations because the residents were so happy with the results and shared them with their neighbors.

Daily Acts received a grant for the Land Resilience Partnership and their eligibility criteria were entirely grant driven, but prioritized East Petaluma, where residents have faced the greatest climate impacts. The grant required a minimum total of 1.5 acres and 5.1 acre-feet of water savings across projects. Daily Acts took advantage of the City of Petaluma's Mulch Madness for mulching supplies, which required a minimum of 500 square feet of high water-use turf landscape that is actively irrigated or has a recent history of being irrigated. Daily Acts did not use design templates in their program, but did create plant templates that grouped compatible plants together. Daily Acts recommended early communication with any plant nurseries, as they experienced minor delays waiting for certain species. Plants selected were meant to be low or no-maintenance, reducing the need for long-term maintenance for the landscape transformations. Daily Acts has provided some additional maintenance work past their original terms for a few sites, but has largely handed off the responsibility to the property owners.

Daily Acts used a web-based application for the program. Staff reviewed the criteria, reviewed the application, and conducted a phone screen to verify. Once the phone screen was passed, staff would initiate a site assessment, print a map of the site, and denote where clients would want certain plants or features to go. Daily Acts did not contend with any procurement regulations as the work was mostly conducted by the North Bay Conservation Corps and when outside contractors were needed, the contracts stayed under the \$25,000 limit that would trigger a bid process within the City.

Daily Acts used a tool from Watershed Progressive called Hydrodesign to estimate water savings, which also measured additional shade created among multiple benefits tracked. Daily Acts came back to project sites to check soil health as well, taking qualitative measurements of the soil.

Rural Program Highlight:



Watershed Progressive Land Resilience Partnership Program

The Land Resilience Partnership (LRP) is a cooperative effort led by Watershed Progressive in partnership with local governments, nonprofit organizations, and workforce development partners across California. The program helps Californians become more drought, fire, flood, and climate resilient by connecting people with opportunities to transform their land with simple tools like rain tanks, grey water systems, and native plants. The LRP has been implemented statewide and specifically in rural areas of Tuolumne, Mariposa, Calaveras, Mono, Inyo, Ventura, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, and Mendocino Counties.

LAND RESILIENCE PARTNERSHIP FRAMEWORK

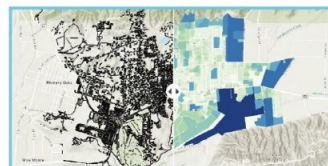
Co-Created LRP Direct Install Program for Your Community



Messaging and Engagement What + Why + How?



GIS Analysis of Watershed Multi-benefits Potential



Customized Trainings Assessment + Design + Installation



Co-Designed DIY Toolkits + Templates for Your Region



Live Drawing + Analysis Tools Add Up Actions + Benefits



Professional Design + Permitting Support



Installation + Project Management Guidance



Maintenance + Monitoring + Ongoing Funding Support



Project Description

The LRP originated in Tuolumne County from a partnership with Tuolumne County Resource Conservation District (TCRCD) and the Department of Water Resources (DWR). In 2018, TCRCD initiated two technical assistance programs for land-stewards providing access to local water strategies and technical guidance in implementation and ongoing maintenance. The LRP has been operating in various locations since, offering the program to people and organizations that steward land, including residents, commercial businesses, local governments, agricultural properties, and public spaces. Watershed Progressive works with local partners and sponsors to bring the program in each area. Local programs can range in services offered, which typically includes:

- Free site assessments and recommendations, including custom designed landscapes, for all participants
- Direct installation of selected projects
- Labor costs fully covered by grant funding
- Ongoing maintenance

Watershed Progressive also created toolkits with specific information, do-it-yourself design guides, and materials focused on specific climate resilience enhancements, which include:

- **Streamflow Enhancement**
- **Drought Resilient Communities**
- **Landscape Transformation**
- **Wildfire Resilience**



Rural Areas Approach

Watershed Progressive worked with several partners and sponsors in rural areas in California, including Tuolumne, Mariposa, Calaveras, Mono, Inyo, Ventura, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, and Mendocino Counties.

Watershed Progressive used a variety of outreach methods to reach potential participants, but found the most success in connecting with community groups to find the social network of the community. This gave them a better understanding of where people get their information from and what priorities they may have, while also helping to mitigate the impacts of unreliable cell or internet service. Installing demonstration projects in the rural areas were a key strategy to encourage participation in the program. Watershed Progressive selected sites based on conversations with community and tried to aim for high visibility areas like key public spaces or on a community leaders property.

About a third of the program participants were connected to either private wells or had connections to mutual water companies. Those participants reported hearing about the program from a community group or neighbor. A primary motivator for these participants were well levels, which drove an increase in participation during the drought.

Watershed Progressive tailored their eligibility criteria to their funding source, but typically used a benchmark income level of under 60% of the County's median household income for disadvantaged community funding programs. For grants received from DWR, Watershed Progressive met with the community to identify spaces and places that vulnerable communities use and the areas they live in. Watershed Progressive sought to make the process more accessible and offered alternative methods for verifying income levels, using programs like SNAP as documentation for eligibility. Other eligibility criteria used included walking or bike riding proximity to a public transit system, free school lunches, or using the Public Health Alliance's Healthy Places Index in collaboration with community.

The application process was designed to be as minimal as possible, with the intent to eliminate barriers to entry. Watershed Progressive took on the brunt of the paperwork needed to start the process and developed a simple, web-based application for potential participants. Watershed Progressive also provided on-site support, which sometimes

included a paper copy application which would be uploaded on behalf of the applicant. Watershed Progressive used an online database to ensure that there would be easy access to applications and other necessary documentation and recommended this approach to keep materials organized.

Program funding could come from different sources which may warrant more procurement regulations. Watershed Progressive acted as the contractor for some projects which reduced the complexity of contractor procurement. In acting as the contractor, Watershed Progressive was able to source contractors without a bid process. For some grant funded projects that Watershed Progressive was not the contractor, Watershed Progressive followed local laws and regulations, which tended to be looser in rural areas than urban areas. If grant funded, procurement typically required prevailing wage compliance which could be tricky for contractors in rural areas who may not be as familiar with the requirements. Watershed Progressive found that contractors were less available in rural areas, especially in more remote areas. Some contractors would not travel out far enough and some local contractors simply did not have capacity to take on projects, working on other local projects. Watershed Progressive noticed that many rural contractors were specialized and did not necessarily have the right expertise. Watershed Progressive sometimes provided training to address these gaps but found this to be a noticeable difference in rural areas. Cash flow was another capacity challenge in rural areas, with smaller contractors unable to wait for the State or Federal reimbursement process.

Watershed Progressive used a tool called Hydrodesign to estimate water savings for projects. The tool is a GIS platform that takes inputs for the area to build evaluate potential savings and also set a project budget. Monitoring can be tricky in rural areas, where some residents may feel uncomfortable with their data constantly being collected. Watershed Progressive offered those uncomfortable with monitoring a self-reporting monitoring option which also helped with internet connectivity issues in areas with unreliable service. Watershed Progressive tracked a few other benefits including overall square feet transformed, photographic change over time, soil modification, behavioral monitoring, and shade and canopy improvements. Soil modification was tracked using a penetrometer before and after implementation. Watershed Progressive also tracks some ecological benefits including water reuse, pollinator or songbird habitat, and local fire assessments.



6. References

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Appendix A: Direct Install Programs

Land Resilience Partnership (LRP)

Daily Acts

LRP was implemented as a direct-install model to address barriers commonly associated with rebate-based conservation programs, including upfront costs, technical complexity, and limited contractor access. Through this approach, participating households and community sites received hands-on technical support, design services, and installation assistance, rather than being required to manage projects independently. Daily Acts piloted the Land Resilience Partnership in Sonoma County through a Department of Water Resources-funded Urban and Multibenefit Drought Relief grant, delivering a combination of site assessments, concept designs, and direct installations between 2023 and 2025. Program services included:

- Rainwater harvesting systems
- Rain gardens and bioswales
- Greywater reuse systems
- Lawn conversions via sheet mulching
- Climate-appropriate plantings, including native plants and habitat-providing trees

Participating sites included single-family homes, schools, parks, and other community spaces, with a significant share located in DAC areas prioritized for climate and water vulnerability.

Customer Base: Urban - Residential, HOA, Institutional
Program Location: Petaluma
Program Run Dates: 2023-2025
Contact Information: Liz Platte-Bermeo, liz@dailyacts.org;
 Cody Darling, cody@dailyacts.org

Disadvantaged Communities - Single-family Affordable Solar Homes (DAC-SASH)

GRID Alternatives

The SASH program was structured to provide qualifying single-family homeowners with access to solar technology while also providing green jobs training, employment, and community engagement opportunities. The program was enacted by CA Assembly Bill 2723, which directed that a minimum of 10% of California Solar Initiative (CSI) funds be set aside for programs assisting low-income households in Investor Owned Utility (IOU) service territories. Originally scheduled to sunset in 2015, the SASH program was extended to 2021. Under the original SASH fund, GRID Alternatives installed systems on over 5,200 homes in California and under SASH 2.0 that number is 4,300 homes as

of early 2022, for a total of almost 10,000 households served. SASH funds have enabled communities that have been historically left out of the renewable energy market to become integral partners in building a more sustainable community and solar industry.

Customer Base: Urban/Rural - Residential
Program Location: Statewide
Program Run Dates: 2008-2021
Contact Information: Luke Wojtaszek, lwojtaszek@gridalternatives.org

Disadvantaged Community Direct-Install Turf Replacement Program

Indio Water Authority

The Indio Water Authority (IWA) Disadvantaged Community Direct-Install Turf Replacement Program is a water conservation initiative designed to reduce outdoor water use and improve landscape efficiency in Disadvantaged Communities (DACs) within the City of Indio. The program focuses on no-cost, contractor-led landscape transformations, removing traditional turf and replacing it with desert-adaptive landscaping to help participating households save water and lower utility bills. IWA's direct-install approach is specifically intended to eliminate financial, administrative, and participation barriers by delivering services directly to eligible customers rather than requiring customers to pay costs upfront or manage contractors themselves.

The program is implemented through a contractor-led direct-install model, supported by grant funding, in which third-party contractors conduct outreach, verify eligibility, complete landscape installations, and provide post-installation documentation. This approach reduces administrative burden on IWA staff while maintaining oversight of quality and consistency.

Customer Base: Urban-Residential
Program Location: Indio
Program Run Dates: Ongoing
Contact Information: Ines Campos, icampos@indioca.gov

Landscape Efficiency Assistance Program (LEAP)

Los Angeles Department of Water and Power

The Landscape Efficiency Assistance Program (LEAP) is a Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) initiative that provides free, professionally installed water-efficient landscapes for eligible single-family residential customers living in Disadvantaged Communities within the City of Los Angeles. The grant-funded program is designed to reduce outdoor water use, lower household water bills, and improve neighborhood sustainability by replacing traditional turf landscapes with climate-appropriate, water-saving alternatives.

LADWP's direct-install turf replacement program emerged in response to persistent participation gaps in traditional rebate programs, particularly in disadvantaged communities. Workshop participants from LADWP recognized that removing upfront costs and offering all-inclusive design and construction services were necessary to encourage more equitable participation and meet conservation goals. LEAP is intended to remove that barrier by offering no-cost, direct-install services, with all design and construction work coordinated and overseen by LADWP through qualified contractors.

Customer Base: Urban-Residential
Program Location: Los Angeles County
Program Run Dates: Ongoing
Contact Information: Rosanna Lau, Rosanna.Lau@ladwp.com;
 Sarah Viramontes, Sarah.Viramontes@ladwp.com

Community Language Efficiency Outreach Direct Install Program (CLEO-DI)

SoCalGas

The CLEO-DI Program offers direct install services for eligible residents residing within the SoCalGas service area. The program also offers in-language outreach and energy seminars to support the diverse communities and schools. Direct install services include natural gas appliances, water and HVAC products and services.

Customer Base: Urban/Rural - Residential, Commercial, Institutional
Program Location: Southern California
Program Run Dates: Ongoing
Contact Information: Hugo Gonzales, hgonzalez@socalgas.com;
 Gustavo Sevilla, gsevilla@socalgas.com

Ocean Friendly Gardens

Surfrider Foundation

Surfrider's Ocean Friendly Gardens (OFG) program offers simple and beautiful nature-based solutions to protect clean water and support resilient coasts and communities. OFGs restore the natural functions of healthy watersheds by contouring landscapes for rainwater retention, directing water back into the ground instead of storm drains. The extensive root systems of native plants help naturally filter pollutants and sponge up extra water while restoring biodiversity to our urban landscapes.

Customer Base: Urban - Residential, Institutional
Program Location: Long Beach
Program Run Dates: Ongoing
Contact Information: Katie Dressendorfer, kdressendorfer@surfrider.org

Land Resilience Partnership (LRP)

Watershed Progressive

The LRP originated in Tuolumne County from a partnership with Tuolumne County Resource Conservation District (TCRCD) and the Department of Water Resources (DWR). In 2018, TCRCD initiated two technical assistance programs for land-stewards providing access to local water strategies and technical guidance in implementation and ongoing maintenance. The LRP has been operating in various locations since, offering the program to people and organizations that steward land, including residents, commercial businesses, local governments, agricultural properties, and public spaces. Watershed Progressive works with local partners and sponsors to bring the program in each area. Local programs can range in services offered, which typically includes:

- Free site assessments and recommendations, including custom designed landscapes, for all participants
- Labor costs fully covered by grant funding
- Ongoing maintenance
- Direct installation of selected projects

Watershed Progressive also created toolkits with specific information, do-it-yourself design guides, and materials focused on specific climate resilience enhancements, which include:

- Streamflow Enhancement
- Landscape Transformation
- Drought Resilient Communities
- Wildfire Resilience

Customer Base: Urban/Rural - Residential, Commercial, Institutional, Agricultural
Program Location: Statewide
Program Run Dates: 2018-Present
Contact Information: Regina Hirsch, regina@h2oprogressive.com

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