

Binational Resilience Initiative 2026 Grant Guidelines

Overview

The [Binational Resilience Initiative](#) (BRI) builds resilience in the Cali-Baja region by supporting binational projects that strengthen the capacity of our communities to adapt to the impacts of our changing climate. A partnership of [San Diego Foundation](#) (SDF), [International Community Foundation](#) (ICF), [Resilient Cities Catalyst](#) (RCC), and the [San Diego Regional Climate Collaborative](#) (SDRCC), we are leading an innovative, community-driven process that recognizes the interdependent environmental, economic, and cultural assets in San Diego and northern Baja California and strengthens resilience by addressing climate vulnerabilities through binational collaboration and localized solutions.

1. Coastal/Marine Grants

Communities in the Cali-Baja region share ecosystems, watersheds and coastlines. The BRI Coastal/Marine Grants supports binational partnerships that advance research, collaboration and community-driven solutions to address climate impacts affecting our shared region.

[Grant Guidelines](#)

2. Water Grants

In San Diego and Tijuana, water treatment facilities have not been expanded at a pace that matches urban expansion. The BRI Water Grants further advances a water resilience strategy that supports the health of our communities and helps sustain water resources for the future.

[Grant Guidelines](#)

1. Coastal/Marine Grants

Building Resilience Along the Cali-Baja Region

The Cali-Baja region encompasses a diverse region spanning the entire greater San Diego area in the U.S. and the Pacific side of northern Baja California, Mexico, between Tijuana and Ensenada/San Quintín. Our focus area within the Cali-Baja region encompasses a wide variety of landscapes from mountain ranges, desert mesas, wetlands, coastal watersheds, and the coastal/marine ecosystems.

Despite political boundaries and the U.S.-Mexico border, communities of the Cali-Baja region are uniquely connected through environmental, economic, cultural, and other interdependencies between San Diego and northern Baja California. This interconnected and complex region calls for unique intersectional projects and collaborations to build binational resilience. Yet, due to the dissection of the region by the international border, the use of our shared coastal, freshwater, and land resources has been driven by divergent approaches, priorities, and goals. The management and planning for the best future we can build as a region is restricted by the lack of a binational, regional approach that limits the strengths we can lend to each other. This disconnected approach limits our capacity to adapt to climate change, manage and conserve our shared resources, and thrive together.

The Funding Opportunity

The Binational Resilience Initiative supports projects that build resiliency in the Cali-Baja region. We will expand the network of binational partners advancing the resiliency of the region between San Diego County and northern Baja California coastal communities, as well as expand funding to generate innovative binational approaches and thriving communities. Grantmaking goals for BRI include expanding binational, scientific climate collaboration as well as advancing coastal/marine resilience from an integrated, regional approach.

Specific Criteria for BRI Coastal/Marine Grants

- Focus on coastal/marine resilience: where the work proposed helps increase our region's understanding of climate change effects on our coastal/marine resources.
- Effective demonstration of binational collaboration: where the work proposed supports true binational collaboration among U.S. and Mexican community-based organizations, scientists, researchers, educators, and/or government agencies.
- Contributes to coastal/marine resilience in two or more of these areas:
 - Climate relevance: Directly or indirectly supports efforts that mitigate, adapt or create resilience to impacts from climate change.
 - Economic prosperity: Supports efforts for organizations to obtain additional impact dollars where the project/grant serves to support catalytic funding needs for the organization/project.
 - Knowledge sharing: Supports education and/or communication of binational resilience needs and climate-related impacts.
 - Organizational resilience: Supports efforts related to the long-term resilience and health of the organization, such as resources that directly support organizational capacity building and staff needs.
 - Research: Creating new knowledge, filling gaps in collective understanding and synchronicity with existing research.

- Nonprofit organizations in Mexico or the U.S. should be the lead applicant but partnerships with other stakeholders are highly encouraged.
- Each binational partnership proposing a project should include at least one US nonprofit (or an entity with an equivalent tax-exempt status) and one MX nonprofit that is not a subsidiary of the US nonprofit (or an entity with an equivalent tax-exempt status, such as a research center or university.)
- The budget can include subgrants between nonprofit organizations if these are working on different areas within the same proposed binational project.
- The budget requested may include up to a maximum of 15% of total direct expenses as overhead or indirect costs. For example, if the total budget requested from BRI is the maximum allowed of \$100,000 per project, then the indirect costs cannot exceed 15% of the direct costs (\$86,957 in combined direct costs, plus a maximum of 15% of these (as indirect costs), will add up to the maximum of \$100,000 per project).
- Funding requested can be up to \$50,000 per year per organization, regardless of the number of partnerships or projects each organization collaborates with.
- Funding requested can be up to \$100,000 per year, per binational project; this maximum includes requests for BRI funding from all partners per binational project.
- Funding can be requested for up to one year. Larger funding requests may require additional information and documentation.

Application Process

The timeline for the Binational Resilience Initiative grant cycle is outlined below. San Diego Foundation reserves the right to modify these dates and any other terms or conditions outlined in these grant guidelines. All applications must be submitted online by **5:00 p.m. PDT on April 3, 2026**. We cannot accept proposals by email; we strongly recommend submitting your application as early as possible to avoid technical issues with the online application.

Please submit all application materials via [Foundant](#). Please review the [GLM Applicant Tutorial](#) to learn how to create a new account and log in to [San Diego Foundation's Foundant Portal](#).

If you would like to set up a time to discuss your application with SDF staff, please reach out to ycarrillo@sdfoundation.org or call (858) 500-2026. SDF staff will be available to provide technical assistance throughout the application period ending on April 3, 2026.

Grant Cycle Timeline

*All hours are in U.S. Pacific Daylight Time (PDT), which matches exactly the local time in Tijuana, Baja California. Example: 3 p.m. PDT is equal to 3 p.m. local time in Tijuana, Baja California.

Dates	Milestones
March 2, 2026	Grant applicaton opens

March 6, 2026 at 1:00 p.m. PDT	Grantseekers webinar (Register here)
April 3, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. PDT	Grant application closes
By July	Notifications go out to selected grant proposals

Eligibility

- SDF will prioritize funding projects taking place in and benefiting communities of concern or historically under-resourced communities that could be considered underserved or vulnerable to economic, environmental and social impacts.
- Projects within the Cali-Baja region.
- Projects should be completed within a 12-month timeline. Please note that we fully understand the dynamic and unpredictable circumstances we all find ourselves in and will be flexible where possible.
- Each proposal must be led by a nonprofit with 501(c)(3) public charity status in the U.S. or led by a donataria autorizada in good standing with the Tax Administration Service/SAT in Mexico.
- A U.S. 501(c)(3) public charity may serve as a fiscal sponsor for another applicant, including Mexican nonprofits, to administer the grant and provide regular financial reporting to SDF.
- SDF can only make grants directly to nonprofit organizations with U.S. 501(c)(3) status. Therefore, Mexican nonprofits whose U.S. partners in the project cannot serve as their U.S. fiscal sponsor will be assigned to ICF as their U.S. fiscal sponsor. ICF can serve only as U.S. fiscal sponsor, but ICF cannot have any other role in projects applying for BRI funding. Thus, ICF will not be considered the U.S. partner fulfilling the role of a U.S. partner or binational collaborator in Mexican-led projects.
- SDF will not fund endowments, existing obligations/debt, scholarships or projects that promote religious or political doctrine.

About the Review Process

Proposals will be reviewed jointly by SDF staff, as well as staff from our partner organizations and the BRI Task Force that will evaluate proposals based on relevance to the Binational Resilience Initiative Grant Program criteria described above. Reviewers adhere to a strict conflict of interest policy and other internal controls to ensure that grant funding is distributed based on the merits of each proposal. SDF staff will submit final recommendations to the SDF Board of Governors for final review and approval.

Questions

If you have questions regarding the BRI application process or the grant program in general, please contact Yamilett Carrillo or Nancy Torres at environment@sdfoundation.org.

2. Water Grants

Building Water Resilience

The Cali-Baja region's continuous population growth, coupled with more frequent and extreme weather events, has placed considerable strain on the region's natural areas and the capacity of municipal agencies to provide waste and recycling services in underserved communities. In San Diego and Tijuana, water treatment facilities have not been expanded at a pace that matches urban expansion. As a result, raw urban discharges are flowing into the river floodplain with sediment, solid waste, and polluted urban effluent being discharged to the Tijuana River, its estuary, and the ocean.

The worsening conditions of the Tijuana River are an emerging environmental threat impacting the health of local communities on both sides of the border. The quality of river flows impacts the quality of life and the health of people living near the impaired river stream, the estuary, and the surrounding coastal areas.

The Funding Opportunity

Through BRI, we are building a coordinated pooled-funding model to invest in watershed-wide binational projects that complement infrastructure investments made by federal governments in the United States and Mexico. BRI can advance water resilience projects through these priority focus areas:

1. Tijuana River Restoration (transboundary river)
2. Pollution Reduction (binational approach)
3. Water Conservation Measures in the Tijuana River region to protect our Colorado River water supply

As stewards of the Cali-Baja region, we need an active and strong network of binational community-based organizations working with each other, alongside government investments, through a watershed-wide approach. We are excited to leverage our work to date in establishing BRI's coastal resilience focus and further advance a water resilience strategy that supports the health of our communities and helps sustain water resources for the future.

Specific Criteria for BRI Water Grants

- Focus on water resilience: where the work proposed helps increase our region's understanding of climate change effects on our water resources related to the Tijuana River watershed.
- Effective demonstration of binational collaboration: where the work proposed supports true binational collaboration among U.S. and Mexican community-based organizations, scientists, researchers, educators, and/or government agencies.
- Contributes to water resilience in two or more of these areas:
 - Climate relevance: Directly or indirectly supports efforts that mitigate, adapt or create resilience to impacts from climate change.
 - Economic prosperity: Supports efforts for organizations to obtain additional impact dollars where the project/grant serves to support catalytic funding needs for the organization/project.

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