

Aquatic Center Grant Program
Division of Boating and Waterways
August 4, 2026

Summary:

The Aquatic Center Grant program provides grants to organizations that offer on-the-water boating safety courses to the public and that teach practical boat handling skills, boating laws, rules of the road, equipment requirements, along with other boating safety information.

Funding can be used to purchase boating equipment, provide student scholarships for courses, instructor training, and for event costs associated with National Safe Boating Week.

Application Deadline: Estimated to be October 30, 2026 for funding from the 2026-27 federal appropriation.

Application Procedure: Applicants are required to submit a complete application via DBW's online grant application system. Applications are evaluated competitively in accordance with the federal funding criteria. Only the most competitive application requests are funded.

2025-26 Program Accomplishments

- A total of \$1,336,999 was awarded to 41 grantees.
- DBW grantees taught approximately 67,000 people on-the-water boating safety education.
- Fall 2025: Aquatic center staff attended DBW's one in-person Aquatic Center Directors Meeting at South Lake Tahoe. This was the first time in many years a statewide directors meeting was held.
- Sixteen DBW-funded boating safety events were held in 2025.

Typical Grant Amount: The average award during the last funding cycle was \$32,610. Up to \$42,000 is available for organizations serving less than 1,200 students annually. Up to \$62,000 is available to organizations serving at least 1,200 students annually.

Funding Source: Recreational Boating Safety Grant administered by the United States Coast Guard.

Eligible Grant Recipients: Colleges or universities, local public agencies, or 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations.

Restrictions: Funding cannot be used for permanent structures. Courses must have on-the-water instruction, be open to the general public, occur in California, and limit competitive activities when using grant-funded equipment.