



County of Sonoma Fee Waiver Policy

Authority: Board of Supervisors
Approval Date: June 2, 2009
Effective Date: July 1, 2009

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines to be used to evaluate requests for fee waivers and to implement a structure and process through which consistent information for fee waiver requests will be collected and evaluated.

2. Background

Sonoma County is facing unprecedented fiscal challenges. As a result of the economic downturn, job and income losses, declining home values, and reduced consumption, the County's major sources of revenue property tax and sales tax have declined substantially. The situation is exacerbated by an increase in demand for county services. In light of this new fiscal reality, the county is reviewing all resource allocation decisions. Fee waivers, are an expense to the County General Fund. Fees are established to pay for the cost of a service provided by a county department. When a fee waiver is granted, the County General Fund pays the department in an amount equal to the fee waived.

3. Policy

The Board of Supervisors may, at their sole discretion, approve or disapprove fee waiver requests. Effective July 1, 2009, the following general guidelines will be used to assist in the determination of whether a requested fee waiver is eligible or ineligible.

Eligible for fee waivers	Ineligible for fee waivers
Community based organizations (CBO) or non-profits providing a direct service that is similar to or complementary to a key county policy goal or direct service that the county is typically responsible for providing; e.g. emergency or economic assistance or basic sustenance needs (emergency food, shelter, etc.)	Flood elevation program fees
	Other county department fees
	Other governmental agencies – unless they can demonstrate an inability to pay the county fee
Governmental agencies that do not receive tax funding and can demonstrate an inability to pay the county fee	Fund raising events - where attendees pay a fee for admission to the event or in the case of festivals where vendors pay to participate in the event

4. Phased in Reduction for CBOs and Non-Profits

CBOs and non-profits that have received a fee waiver in the 12 months prior to the effective date of this policy, for an activity/event that may no longer be eligible under this policy, will be considered for a phased reduction in fees as follows:

- Year 1 – Up to two-thirds of the fee amount previously waived, may be waived
- Year 2 – Up to one-third of the fee amount previously waived, may be waived
- Year 3 – Fee waiver ineligible

The phased-in reduction does not apply to CBOs and non-profits who received fee waivers for a fund raising activity/event, where the CBO or non-profit has the ability to set entry or participation fees at a level necessary to cover costs, including the cost of any associated fees.

5. Fee Waiver Request Form

Fee waiver requests submitted on or after June 2, 2009, must be accompanied by a Fee Waiver Request Form (Attachment A). Copies of this form may be obtained from the County of Sonoma, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors, located at 575 Administration Drive, Room 100A, Santa Rosa, CA, 95403, or at the following website: <http://www.sonoma-county.org/board/index.htm>.

Fee Waiver Request Forms must be complete, signed, and accompanied by supporting documentation to demonstrate eligibility for the requested fee waiver. Demonstrated eligibility does not assure approval of a fee waiver request.

Completed Fee Waiver Request Forms shall be submitted to the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors at the address above. The Clerk will forward requests to the Board Member specified by the applicant.