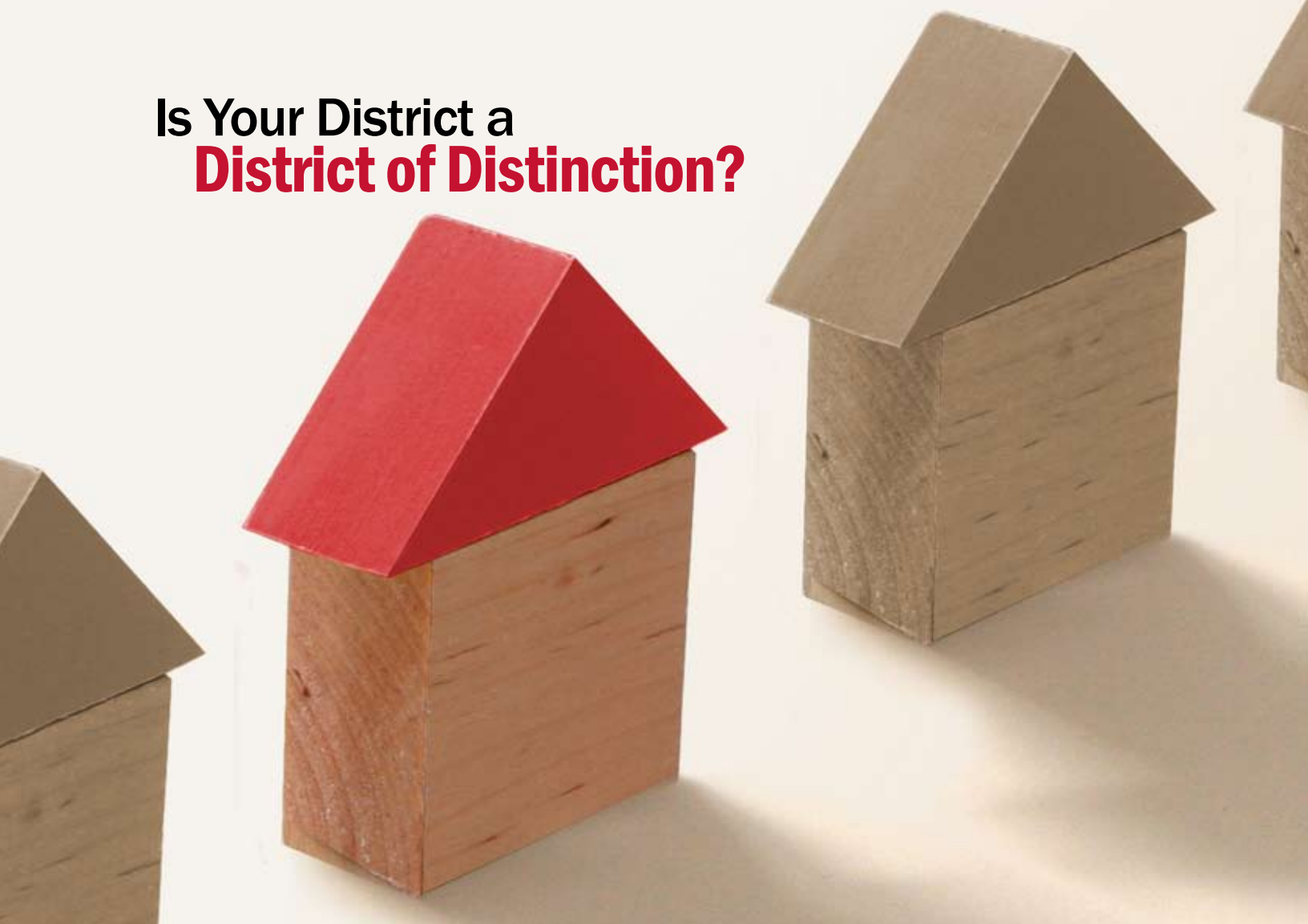


Is Your District a **District of Distinction?**



DISTRICTS OF DISTINCTION ACCREDITATION

A Program to Showcase Your District's
Commitment to Excellence & Transparency



Dedicated to Excellence in Local Government

Special District Leadership Foundation (SDLF)

In recent years the task of governing public agencies has grown more complex, more regulated and more costly. New, more demanding benchmarks for effective government are required. In response, representatives of eight special district associations combined their resources and formed **SDLF** to provide high-quality, cost-effective professional development opportunities for special district public officials and administrative personnel.

SDLF is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded in 1999 as a collaborative effort of the special district community. Today it is supported by eight special district associations:

*Association of California Water Agencies
California Association of Public Cemeteries
California Association of Recreation & Park Districts
California Association of Sanitation Agencies
California Rural Water Association
California Special Districts Association
Fire Districts Association of California
Mosquito & Vector Control Association of California*

*The **SDLF** Board of Directors includes a representative from each of these entities, as well as public members with expertise in local government.*



Districts Of Distinction Accreditation

Nearly every California resident benefits from one or more of the essential services — water, sewage treatment, fire protection, parks and recreation, transit, street lighting, mosquito abatement and more — provided by an independent special district. Because of the kind of services they provide, special districts are the form of local government closest to the people they serve. Yet by their specialized nature, special districts are sometimes thought to operate out of public view, which has led to concern and increased scrutiny by the media and the Legislature in recent years.

The Special District Leadership Foundation, a collaborative effort of eight special district organizations, has developed the Districts of Distinction program to help special districts demonstrate publicly their soundness as providers of essential public services.

What is the Districts of Distinction program?

The Districts of Distinction program is an accreditation program that enables districts to demonstrate to their communities, the media and legislators their commitment to operate in a sound, responsible manner. Districts apply for designation as a “District of Distinction” by submitting financial audits, policies and procedures and proof of training received by directors and executive staff.

Who should apply to be a District of Distinction?

Any California special district that wants to demonstrate publicly the effectiveness of its operations. Applying for this designation shows that your district understands and respects the responsibilities inherent to providing essential public services in a fiscally responsible manner.

What does a district receive for completing the program?

Districts of Distinction earn the right to use the program’s seal on district materials and a plaque honoring their accomplishment. SDLF will also write and issue press releases and notify legislators on a district’s behalf.

For how long is the designation valid?

The Districts of Distinction designation is valid for two years and may be renewed by submitting a renewal application and a \$100 renewal fee.

How does a district apply?

Districts interested in earning the Districts of Distinction designation must complete the application in this brochure and submit it along with the following documentation:

- A copy of the district’s policy manual, including a minute action adopting/reviewing the policies from within the last year;
- Copies of the three most recent audits, including financial statements and management letters; and
- Proof of ethics and governance training for the board of directors and executive staff (at least the general manager).

Applications must also be accompanied by an application fee. The fee is on a sliding scale, based on a district’s ability to pay:

District annual operating budget	Fee
\$0-299,999	\$200
\$300,000-749,999	\$400
\$750,000-999,999	\$600
\$1,000,000-2,999,999	\$800
\$3,000,000 or more	\$1,000

For more information, contact SDLF at 916.231.2939 or visit www.sdlf.org.

Is your district a District of Distinction?

Districts Of Distinction Accreditation

The Districts of Distinction program enables districts to demonstrate to their communities, the media and legislators their commitment to delivering essential public services in a sound and responsible manner. Districts apply for this designation by completing the application and including financial audits, policies and procedures and proof of training received by directors and executive staff.

Financial audits

Districts must demonstrate that they undergo regular financial audits and apply any recommendations to future years.

What to submit:

Copies of the three most recent audits, including financial statements and management letters. Each audit will be reviewed by a member of the Audit Review Committee. Committee members are volunteers from the special district community, including district controllers, directors of finance and general managers.

To volunteer for the Audit Review Committee, contact SDLF at 916.231.2939 or info@sdlf.org.

Policies and procedures

Districts must demonstrate that their operations conform to all statutes and regulations under state law, as reflected in a policies and procedures manual. Policies and procedures should focus on governance, ethics, board conduct, district finances, reserves, etc.

What to submit:

Copy of your district's policies and procedures manual, along with a minute action adopting and/or reviewing the policies from within the past year.

SDLF makes available guidelines for formulating sound policies, adapted from guidelines developed by the Association of California Water Agencies. To receive printed guidelines, contact SDLF at 916.231.2939 or info@sdlf.org, or download the guidelines at www.sdlf.org.

Training

Districts must demonstrate that all directors and executive staff have received training in governance as well as compliance with Assembly Bill 1234, which relates to ethics:

Governance: Six hours of basic governance training within the past five years. Governance Foundations, offered by the CSDA's Special District Leadership Academy, satisfies this requirement. Other courses may qualify as well; contact SDLF for an up-to-date list.

Ethics: As of Jan. 1, 2006, AB 1234 requires two hours of ethics training every two years for elected and appointed members of local government legislative bodies. Any ethics courses that satisfy the requirements of AB 1234 will meet the requirements for Districts of Distinction.

What to submit:

Documentation showing class attendance, such as a certificate of completion, for each board member, general manager and other executive staff members as identified by the board.



Districts Of Distinction Accreditation

Submit this application along with all required documentation and payment to:

Special District Leadership Foundation
 1112 I Street, Suite 200, Sacramento, CA 95814
 t: 916.231.2939 f: 916.442.7889 www.sdlf.org

 District

 Mailing address

 City State Zip

 Contact name and title

 Phone Fax

 Email address Website address

 Assembly Member(s)*

 Senator*

 Local newspaper(s)

** Include all state legislators representing the district's area of operation.*

Please include the following with this application:

- Board of directors roster
- List of executive staff, including titles
- Copy of current operating budget
- Documentation verifying completion of AB 1234 ethics compliance training by all board members and executive staff
- Documentation verifying completion of governance training by all board members and executive staff
- Copies of the three most recent audits, including financial statements and management letters
- Copy of policies and procedures manual
- Copy of minutes showing the policies and procedures have been reviewed and adopted

Please enclose a check for the application fee. The fee is on a sliding scale, based on a district's ability to pay:

District annual operating budget	Fee
\$0-299,999	\$200
\$300,000-749,999	\$400
\$750,000-999,999	\$600
\$1,000,000-2,999,999	\$800
\$3,000,000 or more	\$1,000