

Rainwater Harvesting Rebate Frequently Asked Questions

On July 1, 2023, several changes to the Rainwater Harvesting Rebate Program took effect.

[Click here to learn more.](#)

What does the rebate cover?

The rainwater harvesting system must be sized to capture one inch of rainwater from the drainage area (roof area) to receive full rebate amount of \$1/gallon active and \$1.50/gallon for passive. If a system is not sized large enough to capture the full one inch of rainfall, the customer will receive \$0.50/gallon for all system features. Total rebate amount is determined by the size of your system and the amount it's designed to capture.

- 1. Does the purchase of plants qualify for a rebate?** There is no additional rebate for the purchase of plants.
- 2. Is the cost of a drip system covered by the rebate?** There is no additional rebate for the purchase and installation of a drip system.
- 3. Does the rebate cover recycled materials?** Generally, cisterns must be new to ensure they are of good quality. Used or repurposed tanks will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, depending on integrity of the tank and previous uses. Customer is required to have the receipt/invoice.
- 4. Do rain barrels qualify for the rebate?** Yes, rain barrels must be sized to capture at least one inch of rainfall from the drainage area (usually the roof) to receive the full \$1/gal per active system. If a system is not sized large enough, you will receive \$0.50/ gal for that feature.
- 5. Are curb cuts/core drilling on public right-of-way covered by any elements of the rebate?** There is no additional rebate for the cost of permits and the curb cut/core drilling

within the public right-of-way adjacent to the applicant's property.

- 6. Is there a rebate for the labor portion if I install the system myself?** The rebate for passive system is based on the size of the basin(s), regardless of whether you do the work yourself or hire a designer, installer, or contractor. The rebate for passive systems will be \$1.50/ gallon, based on basin volume, if the system is sized to capture at least one inch of rainfall. If a system is not sized large enough, you will receive \$0.50/gallon for that feature.

Who qualifies for the rebate?

- 1. Does a commercial property qualify for the rebate?** Yes, after July 1, 2015, small commercial Tucson Water customers qualify. Small commercial is defined as a property with a single meter that is 5/8 or 3/4 inches. Properties with more than one meter or meters larger than 3/4 inches do not qualify.
- 2. Can I qualify for a rebate if I am a renter and the apartment complex pays the water bill?** No, you must be a Tucson Water customer with service in your name and multifamily accounts do not qualify for this rebate.
- 3. Is the rebate available for the property I own, if the renter is the water customer, but I (the owner) install the system?** Yes, the owner of the property can apply for the rebate.
- 4. Is the rebate available for the property I rent if I (the tenant) is the water customer and I install the system?** Yes, although you will need permission from the property owner to install a rainwater harvesting system.
- 5. Are builders who integrate rainwater harvesting into their homes eligible for the rebate?** Yes, only if water service is up and running at the time of applying and it is in their name.
- 6. Does the rainwater harvesting rebate apply to new homes?** Yes, if they have active Tucson water service.
- 7. If a property has 2 houses/2 families that share the same water meter can both customers apply to get up to \$2,000 rebate?** Rebate limit amount is per property, per meter. If 2 or more houses share a meter, it is only eligible for up to \$2,000 total.

8. **What if I already installed my rainwater harvesting system?** You would be eligible under the old rebate policy if the invoices showed you paid and installed your system prior to July 1, 2023 and have taken the required workshop.
 - You would not be eligible if you paid and installed your system **after** July 1, 2023 without pre-approval before install. Pre-approval will be required before installation of a rainwater harvesting system. Pre-approval entails: (1) taking the required workshop, (2) submitting a site plan with system features and estimated sizes, (3) approval from Tucson Water to proceed with installation (the customer will have one year to complete installation of their system). A site visit will be required after installation, and before rebate is approved. If customer does not install within one year, they will have to retake the workshop and reapply.

What are the rebate requirements?

1. **If I have a contractor install the rainwater harvesting system, do I still need to attend a workshop?** Yes. It is a requirement that the customer applying for the rebate attends the workshop. The intent of the workshop is to educate the applicant on rainwater harvesting best management practices, as well as aiding with the design and application process.
2. **Can any member of my household take the RWH workshop, or must it be the account holder?** Yes, a member of the household can take the RWH workshop.
3. **Are there requirements for how many inches of water a cistern needs to capture?** There are no requirements for how many inches of a water a cistern needs to capture, but consider that the rainwater harvesting system must be sized to capture a least one inch of rainwater from the drainage area (usually roof area) to receive a full rebate amount \$1/gallon active. If the system is not large enough to capture the full one inch of rainfall, the customer will receive \$0.50/gallon for the system feature.

4. **What are the site plan requirements?** The following elements must be included in your site plan:
 - ✓ **ROOF AREA(S)** - Include square foot TOTALS of areas of your roof you are planning to collect & re-direct runoff from.
 - ✓ **TANK(S)** - If you are installing tanks, show placement & capacity of your tank(s).
 - ✓ **BASIN(S)** - If you are installing basins, show placement of basins & measurements. Show on-ground water flow direction towards basin(s).
 - ✓ **GUTTER** - If you are installing a gutter, show placement of gutter & direction of water flow.
 - ✓ Show roof rainwater runoff flow direction.
 - ✓ Note where the FRONT of the property is.


5. **Are receipts required?** Yes, receipts are required for tanks. They are preferred but not required for earthworks.

Rebate Processing Questions

1. **What is expected timeframe for getting pre-approval once application is submitted?** The expected time frame to receive an answer from pre-approval is 1 – 3 weeks depending on the volume of applications.
2. **What is expected time frame for site visit scheduling once system is installed and client contacts Tucson Water?** The expected time frame to schedule a site visit is 3 – 4 weeks, depending on the time of year and the volume of applications.
3. **How do I request a site visit once I have completed my system?** Call us at 520-791-4331.

4. **When can I expect to receive my rebate check?** After you've submitted your rebate application, you can expect to receive your rebate within 3-4 weeks.

Other frequently asked questions

1. **Can I turn my swimming pool into a cistern?** Yes, the swimming pool can be used as the rainwater storage tank. Precautions include using a food-grade lining (especially if water is to be used on vegetable gardens), ensuring structural integrity of pool system either with crates or poles and ensuring the cover is sealed to prevent mosquito problems. For more information on the benefits of removing a swimming pool, go to poolremovalhelp.org.
2. **Can I get a copy of the PowerPoint for this class?** Please ask the provider you took the class with for a copy of the power point.
3. **What are the specifications for the structural sizing of cistern for backyard?**
 - Zoning requirements for cisterns are set by City of Tucson Planning and Development Services within the city limits and by Pima County Development Services outside of the city limits. Links to City of Tucson tank zoning and permit requirements:
https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/tucson/latest/tucson_az_udc/0-0-0-5276,
https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/tucson/latest/tucson_az_udc/0-0-0-4907
 - In the county, see the Pima County of Ordinances, [Title 18 – Zoning, Chapter 18.07.030, Land Use Regulations, Section R. Rainwater Harvesting System](#) 
 - For additional information: [City of Tucson Tank Zoning and Permit Requirements Pima County Permitting Requirement for Water Tanks and Policy](#)

Last updated July 27, 2023

5. **If I'm doing a phased approach for the installation of my system, do I need to retake the workshop after 1 year?** No, you do not have to retake the workshop in this case.
6. **If phasing plan, do I send in one single plan or multiple plans?** Submit a single plan illustrating phases.
7. **If I already received a tank rebate for less than \$2,000, can I add passive features and apply for the increased amount of earthworks rebate?** Yes. A property can get a rebate total of \$2,000. In this case, the customer can submit a pre-approval form for their earthworks design and may be eligible for the remaining difference up to a max rebate of \$2,000 per property.
8. **Do basins have to be lined with rocks or rip-rap to receive a rebate?** No, basins do not have to be lined or mulched to receive a rebate. If rocks are not being used, we recommend building basins with a 1:3 slope to ensure stability.
9. **If a customer can't get into a workshop before their installation, is the only solution for them to reschedule their install to a later date?** Yes, a customer must take the workshop and submit a pre-approval form before the installation of their system.