SAN FRANCISCO BAY RESTORATION AUTHORITY

Staff Recommendation
December 5, 2025

COMMUNITY ACTIVATION AND SHORELINE RESTORATION THROUGH STORYTELLING

Project No. RA-041
Project Manager: Vanessa Aczon

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to $300,000 through the Community Grants Program to Mycelium Youth Network to implement the Community Activation and Shoreline Restoration Through Storytelling Project, which consists of: (1) providing a 6-month paid internship to approximately 32 Oakland youth to empower and educate them on shoreline and climate justice issues through storytelling; (2) conducting shoreline habitat restoration and enhancement in Alameda and Santa Clara Counties; and (3) hosting a series of community events that will engage the public on shoreline restoration activities, storytelling, and role-playing games.

LOCATION: Martin Luther King, Jr. Regional Shoreline, Eden Landing Ecological Preserve, and Palo Alto Baylands Preserve; Alameda and Santa Clara Counties; Measure AA Regions; East and South Bay.

MEASURE AA PROGRAM CATEGORY: Safe, Clean Water and Pollution Prevention Program; Vital Fish, Bird and Wildlife Habitat Program; Shoreline Public Access Program.

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: Project Locations Map

Exhibit 2: June 14, 2024 Staff Recommendation

Exhibit 3: Project Letters

Exhibit 4: Photos

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority adopt the following resolution and findings:

Resolution:

The San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed three hundred thousand dollars ($300,000) to Mycelium Youth Network (the "grantee") to implement the Community Activation and Shoreline Restoration Through Youth Storytelling Project, which consists of: (1) providing a 6-month paid internship to approximately 32 Oakland youth to empower and educate them on shoreline and climate justice issues through storytelling; (2) conducting shoreline habitat restoration and enhancement in Alameda and Santa Clara Counties; and (3) hosting a series of community events that will engage the public on shoreline restoration activities, storytelling, and role-playing games (the "project"). Prior to commencement of the project, the grantee shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Authority the following:

1. A detailed work program, schedule, and budget.
2. Names and qualifications of any contractors to be employed in carrying out the project.
3. A plan for acknowledgement of Authority funding.
4. Evidence that all permits and approvals required to implement the project have been obtained.
5. Evidence that the grantee has entered into agreements sufficient to enable the grantee to implement, operate, and maintain the project.

Findings:

Based on the accompanying staff recommendation and attached exhibits, the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority hereby finds that:

1. The proposed authorization is consistent with the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority Act, Government Code Sections 66700-66706.
2. The proposed authorization is consistent with the San Francisco Bay Clean Water, Pollution Prevention and Habitat Restoration Measure (Measure AA).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority (Authority) authorize a grant of up to $300,000, as part of its Community Grants Program, to Mycelium Youth Network (MYN) to implement the Community Activation and Shoreline Restoration Through Storytelling Project (the "project"). The project aims to provide a fun and engaging way for middle and high school students to explore ecological and environmental justice issues and involve community members in events that raise awareness about climate change. The project consists of three main components: (1) a 6-month paid internship to approximately 32 Oakland youth to empower and educate them on shoreline and climate justice issues through storytelling; (2) conducting shoreline habitat restoration and enhancement in Alameda and Santa Clara Counties; and (3) hosting a series of community events that will engage the public on shoreline restoration activities, storytelling, and role-playing games concerning the

preservation and enhancement of shorelines areas, such as the Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline (MLK Jr. Shoreline) and Eden Landing Ecological Preserve in Alameda County, and the Palo Alto Baylands Preserve in Santa Clara County (Exhibit 1).

Oakland's economically disadvantaged communities are at the forefront of the challenges posed by sea level rise, flooding, toxic and hazardous waste, and other issues affecting the Oakland shoreline. The city's youth, particularly those from communities of color, face a shortage of education and preparation in confronting these climate-related challenges.

To address this issue, MYN implemented the Storytelling Shoreline Futures: Youth Visioning and Action Project, an Authority-funded grant authorized on June 14, 2024, to develop and carry out an inaugural five-month Leadership in Storytelling Program (LiS Program) in partnership with Save The Bay (STB), the Exploratorium, game designers, and storytellers. This paid internship engaged 12 middle and high school students from Oakland-area communities, empowering them to deepen their understanding of ecological concepts and amplify their voices through storytelling, role-playing games, and hands-on habitat restoration (Exhibit 2). During the LiS program, youth co-hosted four shoreline and habitat restoration activity days with STB, planting 700 western goldenrod and marsh gum plants and removing over 400 pounds of invasive weeds. They also cleaned yarrow seeds and transplanted seedlings at the Palo Alto Baylands and MLK Jr. Shoreline native plant nurseries. The program culminated in an event known as the "Community Day of Action," where the youth led more than 60 community members, families, and more than 20 volunteers and staff in live-action role play and shoreline restoration activities at the MLK Jr. Shoreline.

Building on this success, the project will expand the effort by implementing 6-month paid internships for middle and high school students from surrounding Oakland communities. In year 1, the project will host a six-month paid internship for 16 participants (12 new participants and 4 returning participants from the LiS Program). In year 2, the project will host another six-month paid internship with 16 additional participants (12 new participants and 4 returning participants from the LiS Program). Over the 2 years, the project will engage 32 participants (24 new participants and 8 returning participants from the LiS Program). The project aims to continue to empower youth by increasing their ecological literacy, deepening their understanding of shoreline history and restoration challenges, and engaging them directly in ongoing restoration work, while fostering storytelling skills that build and sustain narrative power.

Participants will visit at least 4 STB restoration sites per year (with at least 8 site visits across the project), where they will collaborate with environmental scientists and historians to explore restoration challenges and solutions, remove invasive plants and trash, collect and clean native seeds, and plant native species. The sites will be located along the MLK Jr. Shoreline, Eden Landing Ecological Preserve, or the Palo Alto Baylands Preserve.

Participants may visit one to two additional restoration sites in Alameda County with other community project partners, where they may engage in oyster reef monitoring activities, such as counting how many oysters are on an oyster reef ball, and learning about the health of the estuary through oysters.

The 8 returning participants from the LiS Program (fellows) will serve as mentors for the incoming 24 new participants and support stewardship of the project. Through the project, the fellows will co-create lesson plans, enhance their facilitation skills through storytelling workshops, and co-design a series of events called the Community Activation Series (CAS), an adaptation of the Community Day of Action from the prior project. CAS will serve as the final component of the project, showcasing the participants' knowledge and skills, raising awareness about habitat restoration, and engaging community members in environmental conservation. Planned to unfold over several weekends or over the span of a week, the project will create and host the CAS events, focusing on hands-on restoration, storytelling, live-action role-playing games, and interactive learning. CAS will occur primarily on the MLK Jr. Shoreline and may occur at other locations, such as local schools, amphitheaters, museums, science institutions and/or community partners' events. Potential activities may include:

- A role play walking tour of the MLK Jr. Shoreline focused on bay shoreline habitat and wildlife adaptations.
- A youth-led trash removal event with reflections on how waste and pollution affect the health of the bay shoreline.
- Tabling at local school festivals, where participants share games they developed through the project to educate their peers on shoreline and climate justice issues.
- Additional restoration activities with STB and other community partners, such as Alliance for Felix Grove and Ninth Root. Activities may involve traditional ecological knowledge sharing or invasive species or litter removal.

In addition, the project will manage an interactive, online portal that facilitates communication and interaction between project participants and educators and educates the public on the project, inspiring the public to engage in shoreline restoration work.

Partnerships with organizations like STB, the Exploratorium, Ninth Root, and Alliance for Felix Cove, highlight the breadth of support for the project, emphasizing a collective commitment to environmental stewardship and community empowerment through a creative approach. Additionally, the project has strong community support, as evidenced by testimonials from previous participants and parents. Their letters of support highlight the significant impact the program has had on participating youth and their families (Exhibit 3).

Grant Applicant Qualifications:

Founded in 2017, MYN has been a pioneer in equipping San Francisco Bay Area youth with resources, training, and knowledge from the ground up that will allow them to survive and thrive in a climate-impacted world. MYN has a demonstrated track record of organizing and facilitating oral story-telling and role-playing games that specifically address environmental justice issues for youth. Additionally, MYN has previously implemented similar projects where community members, led by youth, actively participate in enacting real-world solutions to environmental problems within immersive gameplay. Through their three major programs, Climate Resilient Schools, Youth Leadership Council, and Gaming for Justice, MYN has served over 3,500 Bay

Area youth. As one of the few organizations actively empowering youth to tackle climate change in the United States, MYN is uniquely positioned to carry out the project.

Site Description: Most of the restoration and enhancement efforts of the project will take place at three locations, all of which are STB restoration areas: (1) MLK Jr. Regional Shoreline; (2) Eden Landing Ecological Preserve; and (3) Palo Alto Baylands Preserve.

The MLK Jr. Shoreline is jointly owned by several public agencies, including the City of Oakland, Port of Oakland, East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD), East Bay Municipal Utility District, Alameda County Flood Control District, and Pacific Gas & Electric Company. EBRPD manages the MLK Shoreline and has various leases and agreements to manage parcels they do not own. Eden Landing Ecological Preserve (Eden Landing) is owned and managed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), and the Palo Alto Baylands Preserve is owned and managed by the City of Palo Alto.

Most of the restoration activities will occur at the MLK Jr. Shoreline. The area is situated within a heavily urbanized area. The MLK Jr. Shoreline has a variety of recreational amenities, including hiking trails, picnic spots, and birdwatching areas, and comprises wetland and upland habitats, providing crucial habitats for wildlife. Also, due to the site's location in Central Bay, trash is a common occurrence, particularly during storm events when urban runoff washes debris onto the shoreline.

Minor restoration activities will be conducted at Eden Landing Ecological Preserve and Palo Alto Baylands Preserve. These sites feature diverse habitats, including tidal salt marshes, mudflats, and upland areas, and provide critical wildlife habitats. Both locations are vital for migratory birds and support endangered species such as the Ridgway's rail and the salt marsh harvest mouse.

STB has long-standing partnerships with EBRPD at the MLK Jr. Shoreline, CDFW at Eden Landing, and the City of Palo Alto at the Palo Alto Baylands Preserve. Existing restoration work is conducted under special permits and agreements, permitting volunteer programs, staff workdays, nonnative plant removal, and planting native species. The project has identified specific restoration and enhancement areas that will utilize existing STB's restoration areas within Eden Landing and the Palo Alto Baylands Preserve locations.

Further enhancement activities may take place at MLK Jr Shoreline in Alameda County. Any oyster reef monitoring will be conducted on public lands. The CAS events will take place at restoration sites along the MLK Jr. Shoreline, as well as other potential locations, including local museums, amphitheaters, science institutions, and schools.

PROJECT FINANCING

San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority	$300,000
Project Total	**$300,000**

CONSISTENCY WITH AUTHORITY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION, THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY RESTORATION AUTHORITY ACT:

The San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority's enabling legislation is codified at Government Code, Sections 66700-66706. Government Code Section 66704.5(a) authorizes the Authority to award grant to private entities for eligible projects. Government Code Section 66704.5(b)(1), (3) defines eligible projects to include projects that restore or enhance natural habitats on the San Francisco Bay shoreline or provide or improve public access or recreational amenities as part of a restoration or enhancement project on the San Francisco Bay shoreline. The project is consistent with Government Code Section 66704.5(a)-(b) because MYN is a private entity, and the project will restore and enhance the natural habitats along the Oakland, Hayward, and Palo Alto shorelines and improve public access as part of a restoration and enhancement project within the Authority's jurisdiction.

The project is also consistent with Government Code Section 66704.5(e)—which authorizes grants for eligible projects and permits the various phases of planning, construction, monitoring, operation, and maintenance—because the project includes planning the CAS events and a collaborative monitoring effort.

CONSISTENCY WITH MEASURE AA PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES:

The project is consistent with the programs and measures of Measure AA, as outlined below:

The project will support the *Safe, Clean Water and Pollution Prevention Program's* purpose of removing pollution, trash, and harmful toxins from the Bay by facilitating water health and watershed education, conducting trash cleanups, and engaging in restoration activities to provide clean water for fish, birds, wildlife, and people.

The project will support the *Vital Fish, Bird and Wildlife Habitat Program's* purpose of significantly improving wildlife habitat by replacing invasive plant species with native plants, facilitating learning opportunities, and cultivating partnerships needed for youth and the broader communities to engage in stewardship, maintenance, and monitoring of habitat restoration projects in and around the Bay.

The project will support the *Shoreline Public Access Program's* purpose of enhancing the quality of life of Bay Area residents by hosting a series of community engagement events that will raise awareness and encourage community members to participate in environmental conservation efforts, including pollution and flood prevention and wildlife habitat protection, to protect the Bay's health.

CONSISTENCY WITH MEASURE AA PRIORITIZATION CRITERIA:

1. **Greatest positive impact.** Through a creative and culturally responsive approach, the project will train and educate Oakland youth in the power of storytelling, environmental justice issues, and hands-on habitat restoration work. The project is expected to bolster youths' confidence by deepening their understanding of ecological concepts, instilling a sense of ownership and investment in preserving their shoreline habitats. The combination of

storytelling with environmental science and on-the-ground restoration work, the project creates transformative experiences that foster youth engagement, strengthen leadership skills, and provides a solid foundation for their development as environmental stewards.

2. **Greatest long-term impact.** Frontline communities, especially the youth within them, face a disproportionate vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. To address this inequity, the project will train youth by engaging them on topics that will facilitate a greater sense of civic engagement, and connection between community and the land. Youth will learn from and collaborate with environmental advocates and experts, receiving training on habitat restoration, environmental policy and planning work, demonstrating to the youth the potential careers in the environmental field. Additionally, the project will maintain an interactive website portal on their platform. This portal, which was developed in their inaugural project, will facilitate communication and interaction between youth and educators throughout the program. It will also serve as a platform for the greater public to learn about the project, offering as an inspiration point for shoreline restoration work.
3. **Leveraging resources and partnerships.** The project leverages MYN's relationships with multiple community partners, game designers, and storytellers. MYN will work with STB, Ninth Root, and Alliance for Felix Cove to implement the project. See project letters for more information about these partnerships (Exhibit 3).
4. **Economically disadvantaged communities.** The project is specifically designed to benefit economically disadvantaged communities in Oakland. Many participants may identify as Latinx, African-American, and Asian. These individuals primarily reside in neighborhoods that are disproportionally impacted by environmental issues. Through the project, MYN will pay youth for their time in the program and prepare them with the knowledge to participate in future community-centered, environmental engagement.
5. **Benefits to economy.** The project will provide financial compensation to the youth interns and garner more support for shoreline restoration efforts. The youth interns will also develop storytelling and leadership skills with an environmental lens that will help prepare them to practice civic engagement and potential work in the intersection of art and the environmental fields.
6. **Engage youth and young adults.** The project will engage approximately 32 local middle and high school youth, so they can learn about shoreline ecosystems, participate in restoration work, and receive training to create and lead a series of community events for their peers and communities. Through CAS, a wide range of community members will have the opportunity to participate in environmentally-focused live action role-play games, attend shoreline restoration workshops, and potentially engage with information booths to become involved in restoration work and policy.
7. **Monitoring, maintenance, and stewardship.** Project participants will perform only short-term restoration activities under this grant. However, these activities are designed to support other restoration and monitoring efforts. As part of their existing monitoring protocol, STB will conduct annual vegetation monitoring for all the project's restoration sites. MYN intends to track the project's restoration work, which will allow them to incorporate it in potential future projects.

8. **Coastal Conservancy's San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.** The project meets the selection criteria of the Conservancy's San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program. The project engages youth and the broader communities in shoreline restoration efforts, enhancing the resiliency of shoreline communities and the ecosystems to climate change impacts. The project is a valuable regional investment as it will build and foster leadership skills, social well-being, and knowledge for youth in environmental justice and shoreline resiliency work, ensuring sustainability for future generations. Moreover, the project provides multiple benefits, such as equipping youth with the skills to understand and respond to the impacts of climate change, engaging the broader frontline communities in climate resiliency efforts, and integrating shoreline restoration work that supports and advances existing shoreline restoration initiatives. The project is also thoughtfully planned with meaningful engagement as evidenced by multiple partnerships.
9. **San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission's Coastal Management Program.** The project is consistent with BCDC's San Francisco Bay Plan, part of its Coastal Management Program. In particular, the project will support the Environmental Justice and Social Equity Policies of the Bay Plan, which state that BCDC recognizes the importance of low-income communities of color as invaluable stakeholders and is committed to uplifting the voices of communities who have been historically excluded from decision-making processes. Meaningfully involving these communities means making sure people can participate in decisions about activities that may affect their environment and health. The project will help equip youth in Oakland communities with the confidence, knowledge, and skills necessary to become local conservation leaders and empower them to participate in government decisions that affect the Baylands near their community.

CONSISTENCY WITH AUTHORITY'S INTERIM TRIBAL CONSULTATION POLICY:

The proposed project is consistent with the Authority's Interim Tribal Consultation Policy, Resolution 108. MYN has garnered support for the project from Alliance for Felix Cove, a tribal-led non-profit. In partnership with Alliance for Felix Cove, MYN will maintain ongoing coordination and communication to develop specific workshops and events for the project. Additionally, MYN will actively engage with Indigenous nonprofit groups and organizations like the American Indian Child Resources Center to enhance outreach and recruitment efforts, maximizing participation from Native youth. Such outreach efforts include distributing project materials, conducting informational meetings, and presenting the project to Native youth.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

The project is categorically exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), pursuant to Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR), Section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land), which exempts minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry or agricultural purposes. Examples include new gardening or landscaping,

including the replacement of existing conventional landscaping with water efficient or fire-resistant landscaping. The project is consistent with this Section because it involves removing invasive species and trash, collecting and cleaning native plants, and planting of native species without the removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees.

The project is categorically exempt from review under the CEQA, pursuant to Title 14 of the CCR, Section 15323 (Normal Operations of Facilities for Public Gatherings), which exempts the regular operations of existing facilities for public gatherings for which the facilities were designed, where there is a past history of the facility being used for the same or similar kind of purpose. The project will leverage amphitheaters, museums, science institutions, and schools for curriculum development, training, and public events, which are uses consistent with these facility types.

Upon approval of the project, staff will file a Notice of Exemption.