



SAN FRANCISCO BAY
RESTORATION AUTHORITY

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 14, 2020

TO: Governing Board
San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority

FROM: Jessica Davenport, Deputy Program Manager
San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority

SUBJECT: Proposed Framework for Equity Improvements and a Community Engagement Grants Program for the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority

Background

Measure AA states, “The Authority shall give priority to projects that... Benefit economically disadvantaged communities,” or EDCs. The Governing Board and the Advisory Committee (AC) have both expressed a strong commitment to achieving this goal.

The full timeline for equity work conducted since June 2018 was provided in the staff memo, Improving Equity and Community Engagement in the Measure AA Grant Program, presented at the Governing Board meeting of December 6, 2019. To summarize, the AC formed an ad hoc subcommittee to explore how best to engage with and provide benefits to EDCs in October 2018. To support this work, the Authority hired an equity consultant in February 2019 to develop recommendations for the grant program. The consultant’s report, Establishing an Equity and Community Engagement Program that Benefits Economically Disadvantaged Communities, released in September 2019, was based on input obtained through interviews and focus group discussions with community leaders and equity experts.

In addition to reviewing the equity consultant’s report, the subcommittee reviewed best practices from others, including the Greenlining Institute, Asian Pacific Environmental Network, and Portland Metro Parks. The subcommittee screened the equity consultant’s recommendations for consistency with the Authority’s mission, prioritized the recommendations based on feasibility and expected impact, and identified gaps. The report categorized recommendations as “Near-Term – 6-12 Months”, “Short-Term – 1-2 Years”, and “Long-Term – 3-5 Years”. The AC adopted the Near-Term Recommendations in October 2019. They intend to discuss the Short-Term and Long-Term Recommendations at future meetings.

Staff reviewed the AC Near-Term Recommendations and concurred that the Authority should implement these recommendations. Staff committed to developing actions to implement the AC's Near-Term Recommendations. Staff has also considered whether and how to implement recommendations in the equity consultant's report and other recent reports on improving equity in grant programs.

Proposed Framework for Equity Improvements

The Authority will need to determine the best way to ensure it is supporting habitat projects with meaningful community engagement that truly benefit EDCs. Staff recommends following the "Four Steps to Making Equity Real" described by the Greenlining Institute in Making Equity Real in Climate Adaptation and Community Resilience Policies and Programs: A Guidebook.

- 1. Embed Equity into the Mission, Vision & Values.** The Authority may wish to build on the work of the State Coastal Conservancy (SCC), which released DRAFT Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Guidelines (Attachment 1) in December 2019. After the SCC JEDI Guidelines are finalized, staff would seek support from AC and approval from Governing Board for adopting similar guidelines for the Authority. In addition, equity principles can be brought to the fore in the Grant Program Guidelines and Request for Proposals during the annual revision process.
- 2. Build Equity into the Process.** There are several ways to achieve this goal, many of which are described in the consultant's report and the AC recommendations. Examples include:
 - a. Amend the grant application scoring criteria to incentivize meaningful community engagement in EDCs.
 - b. Allocate staff and/or a consultant's time to attending outreach events, meeting and talking with community groups, and providing technical assistance to prospective and current grantees in EDCs.
 - c. Create a community engagement grants program focused on supporting meaningful community engagement and leadership by EDC representatives in shoreline habitat projects.
 - d. Use recruitment strategies that increase representation of EDCs on the AC and the Governing Board in order to share advisory and decision-making power.
 - e. Compensate EDC representatives for their time spent advising the Authority.
- 3. Ensure Equity Outcomes.** The Grant Program Guidelines currently state that the Authority prioritizes shoreline habitat projects that provide additional recreational amenities, resilience to climate change, reductions in pollution burden, greater civic engagement, and enhanced leadership development opportunities in EDCs. The Authority also gives priority to projects that support workforce and economic development. These are all important equity outcomes.

- 4. Measure and Analyze for Equity.** It will be important to evaluate progress toward equity outcomes over time, noting both successes and challenges. The Authority may wish to refine its current performance measure, “Percentage of projects providing benefits to EDCs” to have more robust definitions and criteria. In addition, the Authority will need to consider unintended consequences, such as green gentrification.

Proposed Community Engagement Grants Program

As noted above, creating a Community Engagement Grants Program focused on meaningful engagement and leadership by EDC representatives is one way to build equity in the Authority’s process. Staff recommends creation of a separate community engagement grants program for projects led by community-based organizations in EDCs so that they need not compete with larger agencies/organizations and projects. This would require more clearly specifying how the eligibility and prioritization criteria encompass projects that may be smaller in scope or area, and/or more heavily emphasize addressing community needs and benefits and building community capacity. Funds could be set aside for this program through the annual budget process. This program could operate on a rolling basis and could include technical assistance in grant writing. This would offer an additional and more flexible (rolling basis) track for project/funding support. Participation in the Community Engagement Grants Program would not preclude community-based organizations from participating in the main grant round. In fact, one goal of the Community Engagement Grants Program could be to catalyze fundable projects in EDCs that may eventually apply for funding in the main grant grounds.

The proposed Community Engagement Grants Program could fund the following types of activities:

- Community visioning led by community-based organizations in EDCs aimed at the development of conceptual plans for implementable shoreline habitat projects.
- Training for EDC leaders to develop, apply for, and implement small shoreline habitat projects in partnership with shoreline landowners, such as planting native plants, removing invasive plants, and cleaning up trash.
- Supporting community-based organizations in EDCs in gaining knowledge of shoreline issues and building relationships with government agencies and nonprofits engaged in shoreline enhancement and restoration in nearby areas so that they can have a voice in the design and implementation of large projects.
- Implementing small shoreline habitat projects with strong community benefits, e.g., community engagement, education, workforce development, career development, leadership development, and community celebrations.

Staff proposes initially allocating \$200,000 for a pilot phase of the Community Engagement Grants Program in the Fiscal Year 2020-2021 budget. Individual projects would be limited to a maximum of \$100,000, with no minimum dollar amount. We propose funding two to three projects in the first year to enable staff to gain experience with these types of projects and because staff time is limited.

The Community Engagement Grants Program could employ several strategies to build equity into the process:

- Notify representatives who participated in the focus groups convened by the Authority’s equity consultant when the proposed Community Engagement Grants Program is being presented to the Governing Board and request their comments.
- Invite groups that receive grants to participate in a cohort and share strategies and lessons learned over the course of the grant period. Labor hours for this participation would be funded by the grants.
- Provide group training on goal setting, preparing a work program, preparing invoices, and communicating successes to wider audience.
- Invite AC members to help with training, give presentations, and be mentors to grantees.
- Recruit Community Engagement Grants Program grantees and other EDC representatives who become engaged and interested in shoreline habitat projects through the Community Engagement Grants Program to apply to be on the AC.

Questions and Issues for Board Discussion

1. Should the Authority move forward with the Community Engagement Grants Program by creating a line item for it in the Fiscal Year 2020-2021 budget and tasks in the staff work plan?
2. One of the AC recommendations was to amend the grant application scoring criteria to show a stronger nexus with EDCs. Here are some options to consider for the main grant round (not the Community Engagement Grants Program):
 - a. Keep the application review process as is, with 40 points out of 100 available to indicate the extent to which the project achieves the priorities of Measure AA, as defined by the nine prioritization criteria in the measure, one of which is to benefit EDCs, but add more explicit guidance on how to evaluate meaningful community engagement related to providing benefits to EDCs;
 - b. Change the application review process to require a designated number of points for projects that demonstrate meaningful engagement of disadvantaged communities (e.g., through community workshops) and support for the proposed project (e.g., through letters of support);
 - c. Change the application process to have two “scoring tracks” of equal weight, one for EDC-focused projects with community engagement and one for projects that have other types of innovative community partnerships (an applicant would need to select one of the two tracks in the application); and
 - d. Move away from competitive grant rounds and work with applicants to develop projects that engage with and benefit EDCs, as well as addressing the other eight Measure AA prioritization criteria;
 - e. Other options?
3. Projects in the design stage have the opportunity for meaningful community engagement, but some projects that have been under development for years and are ready for construction may not have done a good job with community engagement. Should the latter type of projects be grandfathered in?