



SAN FRANCISCO BAY
RESTORATION AUTHORITY

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 10, 2020

TO: Governing Board
San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority

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

SUBJECT: Community Grants Program Staff Recommendation

In response to recommendations from equity and environmental justice representatives, the Advisory Committee, and Governing Board Members to improve the equity of our grant program, staff has developed a Community Grants Program and recommends the board adopt Resolution 69 authorizing implementation of the program. The Community Grants Program will provide an alternative application pathway for projects led by community-based organizations in economically disadvantaged communities (EDCs), as defined by the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority (Authority).¹ The Authority’s Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Budget includes a \$200,000 allocation the Community Grants Program.

Background

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

At the February 14, 2020 Board Meeting, staff presented a “Proposed Framework for Equity Improvements and a Community Engagement Grants Program.” One of the staff recommendations was to build equity into the process of our grant program (adapted from the Greenlining Institute’s Guidebook on “Making Equity Real in Climate Adaptation and Community Resilience Policies and Programs”) by creating a community grants program with a more flexible application and review process, focused on supporting leadership and meaningful community engagement in EDCs.

¹ An *economically disadvantaged community* (EDC) is defined as a community with a median household income less than 80% of the area median income (AMI). Within this set of low-income communities, communities of particular concern include those that: are historically underrepresented in the environmental policymaking and/or projects, bear a disproportionate environmental and health burden, are most vulnerable to climate change impacts due to lack of resources required for community resilience, or are severely burdened by housing costs, increasing the risk of displacement.

Since that meeting, staff have worked to refine how a community grants program could be implemented. The following section explains how the Community Grants Program will work within our general Measure AA Grant Program.

Community Grants Program Description

In the pilot phase of the Community Grants Program, individual projects would be limited to a maximum of \$100,000, with no minimum dollar amount. Staff intends to fund two to three projects in the first year.

Unlike the competitive grant round, which has an annual deadline for applications, the Community Grants Program will operate on a rolling basis, making it as flexible as possible. Applicants will initiate the process by submitting a pre-application, so that Authority staff can determine if a project is eligible for Measure AA funding. The pre-application asks for basic information about the proposed project, schedule, budget, and partners, and it can be submitted at any time. Staff will follow up with a phone consultation to assess whether the project is a good fit for the Community Grants Program.

Based on the nature of the project proposal, staff will advise applicants on whether to submit a full application for the competitive Grant Round, or to work collaboratively with staff in the Community Grants Program (see **Figure 1**).

If staff determines a project is appropriate for the Community Grants Program, rather than submitting an application for a grant round, the applicant will work closely with Authority staff to develop a staff recommendation that can be brought to the Board for funding authorization when ready.

The following types of projects would be eligible for the Community Grants Program:

- 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.

In addition to facilitating co-development of projects, the Community Grants Program could facilitate capacity building in the organizations that receive Authority funding by:

- Inviting grantees to participate in a cohort and share strategies and lessons learned over the course of the grant period.

- Providing group training on goal setting, preparing a work program, preparing invoices, and communicating successes to wider audience.
- Inviting AC members to help with training, give presentations, and be mentors to grantees.
- Recruiting grantees and other EDC representatives engaged in shoreline habitat projects through the Community Grants Program to apply to be on the Advisory Committee.

We are looking forward to learning from and building deeper relationships with community-based organizations in EDCs.

Figure 1. Flowchart of Application Process

