



SAN FRANCISCO BAY
RESTORATION AUTHORITY

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 15, 2021

TO: Governing Board
San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority

FROM: Jessica Davenport, Deputy Program Manager
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SUBJECT: Yearly Update on Implementing Advisory Committee Recommendations for
Implementing Measure AA in a Manner that Benefits Economically
Disadvantaged Communities

Staff is providing this yearly update in response to Resolution 70, Accepting Restoration Authority Advisory Committee Recommendations for Implementing Measure AA in a Manner that Benefits Economically Disadvantaged Communities, passed on July 17, 2020. The resolution states, “The Governing Board hereby acknowledges and appreciates the input of community leaders and the hard work of the Advisory Committee’s ad hoc subcommittee; accepts the recommendations of the Advisory Committee for implementing AA in a manner that benefits economically disadvantaged communities as shown in Exhibit A, as amended with Recommendation 3.2 moved to the list of Short-Term Recommendations; and directs staff to report back annually on progress in implementing these recommendations.”

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. 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 full Advisory Committee approved the recommendations and presented them to the Governing Board, which passed Resolution 70, described above.

Authority's Progress to Date

The Authority has implemented the equity recommendations (Exhibit A) in four main ways: updating the grant program materials and processes, creating a Community Grants Program, supporting new partnerships, and changing funding policies and approaches to lower barriers to community participation. The following narrative is supplemented by a detailed table below.

In July of 2020, the Authority released a thoroughly revised RFP and Grant Application, and a new Pre-Application, for the fourth round of Measure AA's grant program. One significant change was the clear allocation of points for a project's level of community involvement and benefits, when evaluating applications. The materials for the grant round were also revised so that the documents were less redundant, the guidance on project eligibility and evaluation criteria was more understandable, and applicants could consult with Authority staff on projects before submitting a full grant application. The changes to the grant program materials addressed the Advisory Committee's near-term recommendations on improving equity in the grant program (see table below for details). For 2021, the fifth round of grant materials follow a similar template, with minor updates and formatting changes.

The Authority also authorized the creation of a Community Grants Program that would specifically fund community-based organizations in economically disadvantaged communities (EDCs). The Authority is now in its second year of the Community Grants Program, incorporating lessons learned from the pilot phase. Through this program, the Authority is committing to increasing the amount of funds that go directly to community-based organizations and residents in economically disadvantaged communities. For example, the Marin City Urban Wetland Community Visioning Project is funding a grassroots organization to engage community members in shaping the design of a local restoration project, and the budget for the project includes stipends for community advocates to educate other residents about local environmental issues and the restoration project designs. Working directly with community-based organizations and funding them through this program helps build trust between the Authority and communities that have historically been harder to reach or distrustful of government agencies. The program also provides a venue for the Authority to support community-based organizations in connecting and potentially partnering with more traditional restoration-focused organizations for future implementation of shoreline habitat restoration projects.

In efforts to reach more community-based organizations and connect them with restoration-focused organizations, staff also hosted several informal virtual networking sessions by region in 2020. These sessions were meant to help link different organizations and agencies, facilitate conversations about partnership opportunities, and offer a setting for staff and community-based organizations to have more informal conversations to see if Authority funding would be a fit for the organization's projects. In September 2021, staff hosted another set of networking sessions, building on lessons learned from the pilot year. This year, in addition to providing brief staff presentations on the grant programs, we invited representatives of community-based

organizations that have received funding from the Authority to share their experiences, and the other participants said that this was helpful. Participants requested additional and more frequent networking sessions in the future.

The Authority has also updated funding policies to lower barriers to community participation. During pre-application consultations, we encourage applicants to include adequate funding in their budgets for paid community participation, internships, and workforce development for residents of economically disadvantaged communities, as well as funding for food and childcare at community engagement events. Another the steps we have taken is implementing a process to advance funds to grantees that do not have the resources to cover project costs up front, in order to remove a financial barrier of accessing Authority funds. Through the advanced funds process, grantees can receive payment before conducting project activities, rather than receive reimbursement after project activities are done. The advanced funds process is being piloted with one of our grantees, West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project, which is hosting an educational program and community-led planning process for Oakland residents to become engaged in shoreline restoration projects.

Role of Community-Based Organizations

In implementing the AC's equity recommendations, Authority staff have looked to community-based organizations, especially those in economically disadvantaged communities, to guide our work. Community-based organizations bring a history of building strong relationships with residents and elevating community needs. In applying for the Authority's regular grant round and Community Grants Program, community groups have helped Authority staff learn to better engage in dialogue with community groups, and to work collaboratively with applicants and new grantees on developing feasible projects that meet both community needs and Authority grant requirements. For example, with input from Authority staff, the West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project, an environmental justice organization with a long history of community empowerment, developed the Oakland Shoreline Leadership Academy, the first Authority project in which community members can learn about how to plug into ongoing shoreline restoration projects or develop their own projects. The project helps to implement the equity recommendations by paying participants for their time in the Academy, as well as their time developing communications materials to share what they are doing with the community.

Role of Traditional Restoration Organizations

Traditional restoration-focused organizations, including government agencies and special districts, also play a critical role in the Authority's implementation of the AC's equity recommendations. Traditional restoration-focused organizations bring a history of strong restoration expertise in planning and implementation and can be valuable partners for organizations with less restoration experience. Several current and upcoming restoration-focused grantees have formed partnerships with community-based organizations on their projects. For example, in the City of San Rafael, the North Bay's Marin Audubon Society has worked with the Canal neighborhood's local organization Multicultural Center of Marin to inform and engage residents on the planning of tidal wetland restoration at Tiscornia Marsh. In the West Bay, Grassroots Ecology will be working with East -Palo Alto-based Climate Resilient Communities to restore marsh-upland transition zone habitat in Ravenswood Open Space Preserve and Cooley Landing. In the East Bay, East Bay Regional Park District is leading tours as part of West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project's Oakland Shoreline Leadership Academy, described

above, and has agreed to host restoration activities led by community-based organizations such as AYPAL (Building Asian and Pacific Islander Community Power) and Planting Justice.

Details on Implementation of AC Recommendations

As described above, the Authority has implemented the equity recommendations in four main ways: 1) updating the grant program materials and processes; 2) supporting new partnerships; 3) creating a Community Grants Program; and 4) changing funding policies and approaches to lower barriers to community participation. A detailed description of how the recommendations have been addressed is provided in the table below. We have only included the first sentence of each recommendation in the table; the full text of the recommendations can be found in Exhibit A.

1. Updating the Grant Program Materials and Processes

AC Recommendation	Progress to Date
1.2 Request a Letter of Inquiry prior to submitting grant application.	The Authority now offers the option for project proponents to submit a Pre-Application. Use of the Pre-Application is optional, but strongly encouraged, and it helps inform staff’s consultation with the project proponent. In the consultation, staff provides an assessment of whether the project is eligible for Authority funding. If so, staff provides advice on which issue(s) to clarify or emphasize in the full application. If the project is not eligible for Authority funding, staff will provide suggestions on how it could be modified to become eligible.
1.4 Amend scoring criteria to show stronger nexus/relationships with EDCs.	The scoring criteria was revised in 2020 to set aside 20 points out of 40 in the “Likelihood of Success” section for the project’s level of meaningful community involvement and benefits and/or innovative partnerships. As in previous RFPs, 40 points can be earned in the Prioritization Criteria section. One priority of Measure AA is to support projects that benefit economically disadvantaged communities (EDCs).
1.7 Create a document with a basic template of what’s expected of applicants with examples of what a competitive proposal looks like and how to implement the scoring criteria in order to help clarify eligibility requirements.	Staff created this document in 2020 and posted it on the website.

1.8 Create an application checklist for the applicants with a roadmap/blueprint of what they need to have ready in order to fulfill the grant criteria written in plain and accessible language.	The grant application has always included a checklist. The checklist was edited in 2020 to improve clarity.
1.9 Simplify language and phrasing in Measure AA communication materials.	The language in the Request for Proposals, Grant Application, Pre-Application, and other grant materials has been revised for clarity and conciseness. The language in our communication materials for the Community Grants Program (see 3. Creating a Community Grants Program below) has been revised for simplicity and clarity as well.

2. Supporting New Partnerships

AC Recommendation	Progress to Date
1.1 Adopt Guiding Principles of Building Trust and Fostering Partnerships	Staff are working more closely with community-based organizations, through the regular grant round as well as the Community Grants Program (see 3. below). Staff are helping to make connections between community leaders and local government/implementing agencies.
1.3 Conduct community outreach workshops for prospective applicants.	Staff hosted grant program webinars and networking sessions in 2020 and 2021. The networking sessions provided a chance for different organizations to connect with each other and with Restoration Authority staff, ask questions about Measure AA grant programs, and hear about restoration projects happening in the region.
1.10 Enter all funded and potential EDC projects into EcoAtlas as a project hub.	Staff have been involved in helping grantees enter their projects into EcoAtlas and providing EcoAtlas/Project Tracker trainings for new grantees. This could make it easier for staff and grant applicants to see what new project partnerships can be formed, and how projects can be integrated to achieve benefits on a watershed scale.
2.1 Seek more diverse and accurate representation on the Authority's Advisory Committee, Citizen Oversight Committee and on the Governing Board.	Staff have recruited new advisory committee members who represent the diverse communities in the Bay Area and who are focused on advancing equity.

2.6 Provide project planning assistance to help local groups identify appropriate projects and habitat restoration goals.	Staff is funding a project that will help residents in Oakland identify and engage in restoration projects along the shoreline.
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3. Creating a Community Grants Program

AC Recommendation	Progress to Date
2.3 Develop a second, separate application track for small community groups.	The Authority is in its second year of the Community Grants Program, which provides a separate application pathway for projects led by community-based organizations in economically disadvantaged communities. Applicants to this program do not need to compete against more established organizations and larger agencies that have the capacity and resources to apply for the regular grant round.
2.4 Prioritize building capacity of partners and applicants from historically underrepresented groups by offering technical assistance to support first-time applicants with navigating the process and eliminating barriers.	Ongoing and to be continued through Community Grants Program.
2.8 Recognize community-based expertise and confidence in genuinely community-led processes.	Ongoing and to be continued through Community Grants Program.
2.10 Identify and work with community leaders who have already created a trusting relationship with the people in the community.	Ongoing and to be continued through Community Grants Program.
3.2 Seek ways for the Authority funds to support work the community is already doing or interested in doing.	Ongoing and to be continued through Community Grants Program.

4. Changing Funding Policies and Approaches to Lower Barriers to Community Participation

1.6 Examine the feasibility to extend compensation to community members and leaders.	Our grant programs allow for stipends to community members for their participation and contribution on projects.
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2.5 Leverage capacity by identifying community-based groups with the administrative capabilities to partner with smaller and/or grass roots organizations to apply for and manage a government restoration grants.	Staff have piloted an advanced funds program, as well as piloted working with a grantee who needs a fiscal sponsor to receive our grants.
2.9 Reevaluate budgets to allow the true cost of community engagement.	Through the pre-application process, staff are encouraging applicants to include funds for community engagement and stipends for community members if feasible.

Recommendations that have not yet been addressed:

Near-Term – 6 12 Months

- 1.5 Visit economically disadvantaged communities residing along the bay shoreline with the Governing Board, Advisory Committee, and Authority staff to better understand issues and potential opportunities.

Short-Term – 1-2 Years

- 2.2 More directly involve community participants in the grant process including guidance, development, implementation and scoring.

Long-Term – 3-5 Years

- 3.1 Establish a communications strategy that fosters relevance through better understanding needs and priorities of underrepresented community groups.

Next Steps

In the coming year, Authority staff will continue to be guided by the equity recommendations and will look for opportunities to implement those recommendations that have not yet been addressed. Staff is very interested in visiting economically disadvantaged communities residing along the bay shoreline with the Governing Board and Advisory Committee to better understand issues and potential opportunities, as directed by Recommendation 1.5. Tours have been limited during the pandemic, but we look forward to resuming them and will include community representatives as speakers. Staff will consider ways to more directly involve community participants in the grant process, as directed by Recommendation 2.2. The best opportunity is likely through addition of community members to the Advisory Committee.

As directed by Recommendation 3.1, staff will establish a communications strategy that fosters relevance to communities through better understanding needs and priorities of underrepresented groups. However, staff intends to pursue this in Fiscal Year 2022-2023, after we have gained more experience in working with community-based organizations in economically disadvantaged communities and have more examples to share in our communications work.

In addition, Authority staff recognizes that engagement with tribes was not included in the AC equity recommendations, as government relationships with tribes require separate attention. Authority staff will initiate outreach to Bay Area tribes to gather input on how to involve tribes in the Authority’s work in a meaningful way. This is likely to include acknowledging our being

on tribal lands, including tribal perspectives and leadership in our projects, and providing tribes with resources to conduct projects under our funding programs.

Finally, Authority staff is interested in engaging members of the Advisory Committee and Governing Board in developing and adopting Equity Guidelines for the agency. The Authority may want to build on the work of the State Coastal Conservancy (SCC), which has adopted Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Guidelines. Authority staff is seeking direction from the Governing Board on whether to commence the process of preparing similar guidelines for adoption by the Authority.

Staff appreciates the Governing Board's interest in improving equity in the Authority's programs and processes and welcomes feedback and direction.