



SAN FRANCISCO BAY

RESTORATION AUTHORITY

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 18, 2022

TO: Advisory Committee
San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority

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

SUBJECT: Staff Recommendation on Process for Round 6

This memo provides the staff's recommendation on the process for Grant Round 6. Staff recommends forgoing issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) in 2022 and instead relying on the Round 5 list of projects when selecting projects to recommend in the coming fiscal year (FY22-23). In support of this recommendation, we provide an analysis of distribution of remaining funding requests by region, an explanation of how the Authority can address equity concerns, and information about additional funding sources for bay restoration.

Background

In response to its fifth grant solicitation, the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority (Authority) received 18 applications requesting a total of approximately \$56 million. Although the Authority has close to \$23 million available annually, only about \$10.1 million of the total \$23 million is available for Round 5 projects, as described in the February 25, 2022 staff memo to the Governing Board (Item 7). Thus, the unfunded portion of projects from the Round 5 RFP totals approximately \$46 million.

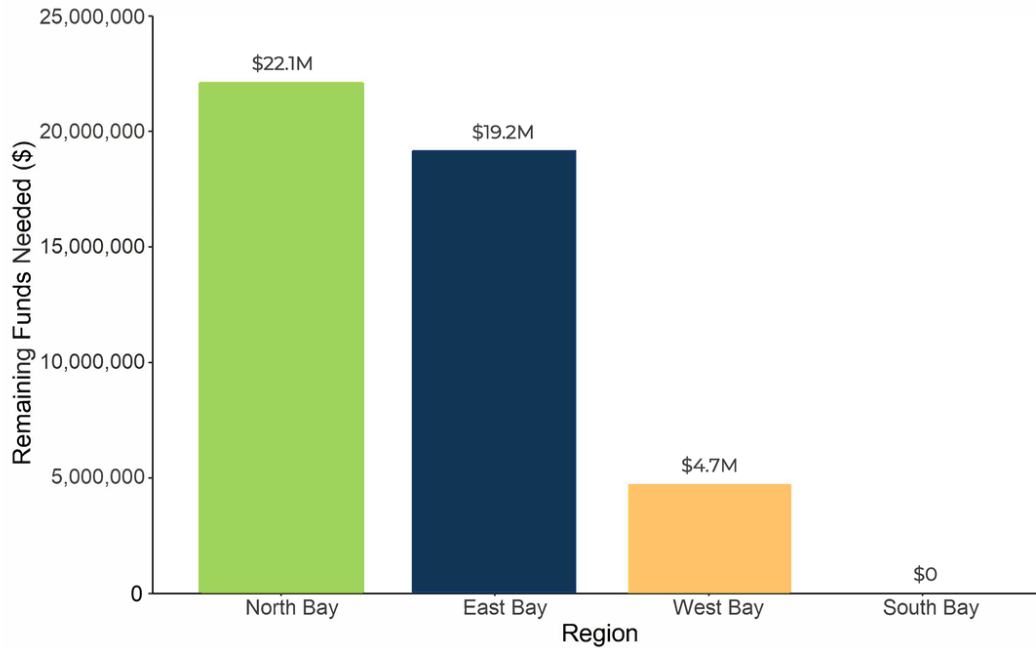
Recommendation to Rely on the Round 5 Project List for Round 6 Project Selection

Given the large number of high-scoring projects in Round 5 and the fact that the Authority's available funds are expected to be approximately \$11.5 million in FY22-23, staff recommends that the Authority forgo issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) in 2022. Staff proposes instead ask applicants with unfunded or partially funded applications from Grant Round 5 that are still in need of funds to submit updated schedules and budgets, as well as any other relevant project updates, in summer or fall of 2022. Advisory Committee (AC) members who served as reviewers for Round 5 would be invited to continue participating in the selection process by reviewing updates to projects they previously reviewed and attending a meeting with staff to provide input on which projects to prioritize. Staff would then review the full list of Round 5 projects, considering the scores and qualitative evaluations from the Round 5 selection process, information provided in the applicants' updates, and AC members input, to develop a list of recommended projects for Round 6 (FY22-23).

Analysis of Opportunities to Achieve Geographic Distribution of Funds in FY22-23

The Governing Board has requested an analysis of opportunities to achieve an appropriate geographic distribution of funds if we were to select from project in the Proposed Grant Round 6 Summary Table, which shows Round 5 projects with remaining funding needs (Attachment 1). The chart below shows the requested funding by region, if there were no RFP in 2022.

Potential Round 6 Requested Funding Amount (\$) by Region, With No RFP in 2022



Given the significant funding need in the three regions that need additional funding to stay on track to meet their 20-year funding targets (North Bay, East Bay and West Bay), we believe that an appropriate geographic distribution of funds can be achieved.

Opportunities to Achieve Equity

The Governing Board has also expressed interest in understanding how the Authority could achieve its equity goals if there were no RFP in 2022. To shed light on this issue, staff has determined the number of projects on the proposed Round 6 list that would benefit economically disadvantaged communities (EDCs) and the number of projects located in EDCs. According to the proposals, all sixteen projects would benefit EDCs either by proximity to EDCs or through engagement with residents of EDCs. Staff used the Authority’s EDC maps^a to determine that six are located in or very close to an EDC. These projects in shown boldface in Attachment 1.

We also note that the Community Grants Program, for which only community-based organization located in EDCs are eligible, operates on a rolling basis. When the FY22-23 budget is proposed in June 2022, staff will be recommending that the total funding for the Community Grants Program be increased from \$400,000 to \$600,000 and that the funding cap per project be increased from \$100,000 to \$200,000.

Other Grant Opportunities for Projects Not Included in the Round 5 List

The proposed approach would not allow for a project that did not apply in Round 5 to be considered for Round 6, potentially excluding worthy projects that were not yet ready to apply

^a The EDC maps are located under “Additional Resources” on the “Restoration Authority Grants” page of the Authority’s website: <https://www.sfbayrestore.org/restoration-authority-grants>.

by October 2021. However, staff is aware of several federal and state funders, including the State Coastal Conservancy, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), that will have higher than average amounts of funding available for San Francisco Bay restoration in the coming year. The Conservancy is expected to receive \$500 million for coastal resilience projects statewide in FY22-23 and FY23-24. EPA's San Francisco Bay Water Quality Improvement Fund is expected to have two Requests for Applications in federal FY22 (October 1, 2021-September 30, 2022) that in total equal approximately \$29 million (several times the usual annual amount) and are intended to fund water quality and habitat restoration projects and support underserved communities' goals. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act included funding for NOAA's coastal programs, and it is anticipated that there will be grant opportunities for coastal restoration through NOAA in 2022. Staff would post information about these and other funding opportunities on the Authority's website and provide that information in response to inquiries from potential applicants.

Applying for grants, particularly from public agencies, takes a considerable amount of work. This recommended approach for Round 6 will reduce the amount of time and effort by potential grant applicants. Project proponents can focus their attention on grant programs in 2022 that have larger amounts of available funding and greater chances of success. Project proponents can apply for Authority funds again in 2023, when the available funding will be greater.

Conclusion

As mentioned above, given the large number of high-scoring projects in Round 5 and the fact that the Authority's available funds are expected to be approximately \$11.5 million in FY22-23, staff recommends that the Authority forgo issuing a Request for Proposals in 2022. Instead, staff would request updated information from applicants that submitted applications in Round 5 and recommend funding for projects based on a combination of previous evaluations, consideration of the updated information, and input from AC reviewers. Staff seeks a recommendation from the AC on this matter.