



SAN FRANCISCO BAY
RESTORATION AUTHORITY

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 14, 2022

TO: Governing Board
San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority

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

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, passed on July 17, 2020. Resolution 70 adopts the Bay Restoration Advisory Committee’s recommendations for implementing Measure AA to benefit economically disadvantaged communities and directs staff to report back annually on the Authority’s progress in implementing the 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 AC’s development of equity recommendations is described 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, in October 2018 the AC formed an ad hoc subcommittee to explore how best to engage with and provide benefits to EDCs. 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 AC approved the recommendations (Exhibit A) and presented them to the Governing Board, which passed Resolution 70, described above.

The AC re-formed the ad hoc subcommittee in 2021 to support implementation of equity recommendations, help evaluate progress and effectiveness, and suggest additional

improvements. On May 20, 2022, the AC approved making the following recommendations to the Governing Board: 1) Increase the cap for projects funded by the Community Grants Program; 2) Direct staff to engage the AC in evaluating equity goals; and 3) Direct staff to hire a consultant to develop a long-term framework to evaluate progress and effectiveness of the Authority's effort to advance equity in its grant programs. On June 24, 2022, the AC presented these recommendations to the Governing Board. Staff responses to these recommendations are discussed throughout this memo.

Authority's Progress in Fiscal Year 2021-2022

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2021-2022, the Authority continued to implement the AC's equity recommendations (Exhibit A) in four main ways: 1) improving the Community Grants Program; 2) exploring funding policies and approaches to lower barriers to community participation; 3) supporting new partnerships with community-based organizations; and 4) updating the grant program materials and processes. Authority staff are also involving AC members in evaluating progress and effectiveness of equity actions and accomplishments for FY 2021-2022 by asking AC members to review this yearly update. The following narrative is supplemented by a detailed table below.

1) Community Grants Program. The Authority completed the second year of the Community Grants Program, which specifically funds community-based organizations in economically disadvantaged communities (EDCs) on a rolling basis. 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 Authority is funding Planting Justice to train youth interns in environmental justice issues and San Francisco Bay habitat restoration at the Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline. Authority funds will support Planting Justice's ongoing education and workforce development efforts. Another project that staff will recommend to the Governing Board for funding authorization in the near future is a proposal from the Brower Dellums Institute for Sustainable Policy Studies and Action. This organization has been deeply involved in the San Leandro Creek Greenway Trail project and wants to engage more community members in shaping the outcomes of their local restoration project. Working directly with community-based organizations can help 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.

2) Lowering Barriers. The Authority has also been working on funding policies to lower barriers to community participation. During consultations with applicants for the competitive Grant Round and Community Grants Program, staff 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. The Authority is also able to work with fiscal sponsors if applicants are community organizations that are not a nonprofit with 501(c)(3) status. Another step we have taken to reduce financial barriers to accessing Authority funds is increasing the indirect cost reimbursement limit from 15% to 20% of a total grant award, which allows organizations to recover more overhead costs. The Authority is also implementing a process to advance funds to grantees that do not have the resources to cover project costs up front. Through the advanceds funds process, grantees can receive payment before conducting project activities, rather than receive reimbursement after project activities are done. The

advanced funds process was piloted with one of our grantees, West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project, which hosted an educational program and community-led planning process for Oakland residents to become engaged in shoreline restoration projects. Staff will discuss lessons learned from that pilot to improve the advanced funds process for future grantees.

3) Networking Sessions. Staff hosted several virtual networking sessions by region in 2021, to continue to reach more community-based organizations and connect them with restoration-focused organizations. 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 the fall of 2022, staff plan to host another set of networking sessions building on lessons learned from previous years, such as the importance of centering the experiences of grantees and project proponents; offering space for participants to connect with staff; providing transparency in our funding programs; and hosting the sessions with enough time for people to make connections before the next Authority grant round. In addition to providing brief staff presentations on the grant programs, staff will invite representatives of community-based organizations that have received funding from the Authority to share their experiences; the other participants have said that this was helpful in past sessions. Drawing on connections and lists from partners and other agencies, staff expanded and updated our outreach list of community-based organizations that may be interested in Authority funding and partnership opportunities. Staff will also reach out to agencies or departments within economically disadvantaged communities that could benefit from connecting with the Authority. Staff have encouraged Advisory Committee members to attend the networking sessions and to spread the word for the upcoming events.

4) Updating Grant Materials and Processes. 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. For 2021, the fifth round of grant materials followed a similar template, with minor updates and formatting changes. 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). The Authority received 18 applications in 2021 but could fully fund only two proposals and partially fund four other proposals – the total funds requested were approximately four times more than the approximately \$10 million available. The available funding for FY 2022-2023 will also only be \$10 million. The significant remaining funding need and the large number of high-scoring projects submitted in 2021 led staff to modify the competitive grant process for 2022. The modification to the 2022 grant round was approved by the Governing Board in April 2022. Staff invited 2021 applicants to reapply for 2022 funds by providing brief updates on their proposal and funding need, to administer our limited funds more efficiently while keeping an emphasis on the need for projects to display community involvement and benefits. Staff have pointed potential applicants to another significant funding source for San Francisco Bay habitat restoration this year, from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. We will welcome all applicants to apply for Authority funding in 2023.

Details on Community Grants Program

For FY 2021-2022, the Community Grants Program's maximum grant award was \$100,000, and the total budget for the program was \$400,000. Based on feedback from community-based organizations and the AC's latest equity recommendations presented at the June 24, 2022, Governing Board meeting, staff proposed and the Authority authorized two changes to the

funding limits. The Authority raised the Community Grants Program’s maximum grant award to \$200,000 per project and allocated \$600,000 for the program in the Authority’s annual budget for FY 2022-2023. Staff noted the value of supporting community-led projects for larger dollar amounts that can potentially fund work over longer periods of time and engage more community members, considering the substantial funding required for meaningful community engagement that may include paid internships and workforce development, and given the significant time and effort needed to develop projects that meet the Authority’s eligibility requirements.

Over the past year, staff have listened to feedback from applicants, grantees, and participants in the networking sessions; noted repetitive or burdensome processes associated with the Community Grants Program; and connected with groups that may be good candidates for the funding. To continue refining the Community Grants Program, staff will pursue several additional improvements, such as updating the Authority’s EDC maps based on 2020 census data, clarifying Measure AA location eligibility maps, and reaching out to specific community-based organizations that may benefit from the Community Grants Program. In the coming years, staff will also facilitate capacity building in the organizations that receive Community Grants Program 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 audiences.
- Inviting AC members to assist with project management or technical analysis or provide other relevant guidance to grantees. AC assistance could be modeled after the San Francisco Estuary Institute’s (SFEI) engagement with the Oakland Shoreline Leadership Academy through their efforts funded by the Resources Legacy Fund to support grassroots organizations in nature-based solutions in shoreline planning.
- Recruiting grantees and other EDC representatives engaged in shoreline habitat projects through the Community Grants Program to apply to serve on the AC and seeking feedback on any barriers to participation. Staff have recruited environmental justice advocates to the AC in past years and will continue to reach out to new representatives.

A full update on the Community Grants Program was provided at the April 22, 2022, Governing Board meeting.

Details on Implementation of AC Recommendations

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

1. Creating a Community Grants Program

AC Recommendation	Progress to Date
2.3 Develop a second, separate application track for small community groups.	The Authority has created the Community Grants Program, which provides a separate application pathway for projects led by

	community-based organizations in EDCs. Thus far, the Authority has funded three Community Grants across three regions of the Bay Area.
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. The Authority is currently working with a first-time applicant based in Oakland/San Leandro to develop a project that staff plans to present to the Governing Board at the December meeting.
2.8 Recognize community-based expertise and confidence in genuinely community-led processes.	Ongoing and to be continued through Community Grants Program and recruitment of community-based leaders to serve on the AC.
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. The three Community Grants funded to date support organizations and leaders with strong connections to community members.
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. For example, staff have revised the work scope of a project in Marin City to meet the community's priorities of addressing water quality and soil contamination concerns before moving forward with a design for habitat restoration.

2. 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 in and contribution to projects.
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 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.

3. 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 1. Creating a Community Grants Program, above). 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. Staff plan to host another set of networking sessions in fall of 2022. The networking sessions provide 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 started to recruit new Advisory Committee members who represent the diverse communities in the Bay Area and who are focused on advancing equity. Half of the Advisory Committee members’ terms will end in 2023, allowing for a broad recruitment effort for new members.
2.6 Provide project planning assistance to help local groups identify appropriate projects and habitat restoration goals.	The Authority has provided project planning assistance particularly through the Community Grants Program. For example, staff facilitated conversations between a grantee and the landowner to determine an appropriate location for a habitat restoration project at Candlestick Point State Recreation Area.

4. 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 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 provides 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 1. Creating a Community Grants Program, above) has been revised for simplicity and clarity as well.

Recommendations that still need to be 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.
 - Staff have shared and will continue to share opportunities for Board and Advisory Committee members to attend events hosted by grantees that are community-based organizations. Staff will also aim to organize visits to EDCs to better meet community members where they are.

Short-Term – 1-2 Years

- 2.2 More directly involve community participants in the grant process including guidance, development, implementation and scoring.
 - Staff have recruited new AC members that represent the diverse communities in the Bay Area and who are focused on advancing equity, and staff will continue recruiting new AC members as existing members term out.

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; look for opportunities to implement those recommendations that still need to be addressed; and further involve the AC in helping to implement equity actions and to evaluate progress and effectiveness. Staff will aim to visit EDCs located 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 AC. As directed by Recommendation 3.1, staff will establish a communications strategy that fosters relevance to communities through better understanding the needs and priorities of underrepresented groups. However, staff intends to pursue this in the coming years, after we have gained more experience in working with community-based organizations in EDCs and have more examples to share in our communications work.

During the development of the equity recommendations, AC members and staff recognized the importance of engaging Tribes and encouraging their participation in the Measure AA grant program but determined that it would be best to pursue this effort through a separate process. Tribes are different from EDCs and the Authority needs to engage with them effectively and respectfully as distinct and sovereign entities. We recognize our responsibility to provide Tribes with equitable access to the Measure AA Grant Program. Staff are therefore developing a Tribal Engagement Policy with the goal of working with Tribes to increase the number of projects developed with strong Tribal leadership and/or partnership. A memo on the development of a Tribal Engagement Policy was presented to the Governing Board on June 24, 2022. Staff acknowledge that outreach to Tribes should go beyond formal government-to-government consultations and should include engaging with Tribal non-government organizations and non-federally recognized Tribes.

Finally, the Advisory Committee has recommended to the Governing Board that staff work on developing a long-term framework of equity guidelines for the agency. The framework should include values, guidelines, actions, best practices and indicators or metrics to evaluate progress and effectiveness. The Authority may want to hire a consultant to build on the work of the State Coastal Conservancy, which has adopted Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Guidelines. Staff and the Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Equity plan to seek Advisory Committee input on the approach to developing the framework in November 2022, and then present the framework to the Governing Board in 2023.

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