

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 20, 2023

TO: Governing Board
San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority

FROM: Jessica Davenport, Deputy Program Manager
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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 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. The majority of these recommendations were intended to be accomplished within two years. Recognizing the need for Equity Guidelines that would extend through the remainder of the Measure AA parcel tax period, staff has been collaborating with the Advisory Committee (AC) and community-based organizations to develop them, and those efforts are summarized in this memo, as well.

Background

Measure AA states, "The Authority shall give priority to projects that... Benefit economically disadvantaged communities," or EDCs. The Governing Board and the 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. The full AC approved the recommendations (Exhibit A) and presented them to the Governing Board, which passed Resolution 70, described above. The AC reformed a new ad hoc subcommittee in 2021 to support implementation of equity recommendations, help evaluate progress and effectiveness, and suggest additional improvements. Staff responded to these recommendations in the 2022 Yearly Equity Update, and the present memo details work completed in Fiscal Year (FY) 2022-2023.

Authority's Progress in Fiscal Year 2022-2023

In FY 2022-2023, the Authority continued to implement the equity recommendations (Exhibit A) in four main ways: 1) forming the Community Grants Cohort as part of the Community Grants Program; 2) making progress on developing Equity Guidelines; 3) supporting new partnerships with community-based organizations through networking sessions; and 4) updating the grant

program materials. Authority staff are also involving AC members in evaluating progress and effectiveness of equity actions and accomplishments for FY 2022-2023 by asking AC members to review this yearly update. The following narrative is supplemented by a detailed table below.

- 1) **Community Grants Program and Cohort.** The Authority completed the third year of the Community Grants Program, which specifically funds community-based organizations (CBOs) in economically disadvantaged communities (EDCs) on a rolling basis. To date, the Authority has funded five community grants totaling approximately \$600,000. More details on proposed and funded Community Grants can be found in Exhibit B.
 - **FY 22-23 Budget and Projects Authorized to Date:** Building on the previous three years of funded projects, the Authority allotted \$600,000 for the Community Grants Program for Fiscal Year 2022-23, with maximum grant awards of \$200,000 each. Thus far, staff have received three eligible grant proposals in FY2022-2023 and the Authority has funded one of them: The Candlestick Point Stewardship Project, Phase 2 led by Literacy for Environmental Justice.
 - **Achievements and Challenges to Date:** The challenges of this program have chiefly to do with grantees providing documents needed prior to starting work, such as evidence of insurance and an agreement with the landowner, and staff capacity to both carry out their project work and provide required invoicing documentation as part of grant management. Staff provide flexibility and technical assistance to grantees facing these challenges.
 - **Community Grants Cohort:** Staff initiated the Community Grants Cohort to more directly engage with potential and current grantees from CBOs by providing technical assistance and opportunities for information sharing among the groups. The participants represent five CBOs: Planting Justice, Ninth Root, Climate Resilient Communities, Literacy for Environmental Justice, and the David R. Brower, Ronald V. Dellums Institute for Sustainable Policy Studies and Action. At the April 2023 virtual kick-off meeting, staff gauged participants' interests and asked what they could each bring to the group. They expressed an overall interest in learning more about habitat restoration and grant management, with several participants offering to host and visit each other's project sites. For the second meeting, in June, the cohort visited the site of the future San Leandro Greenway, Brower Dellums Institute's project, and Planting Justice's nursery, both located in East Oakland. The cohort will meet two more times in FY 2023-24, and staff will request feedback from participants on the program to inform future work. Staff intend to support future Cohorts, depending on CBO interest and staff capacity, potentially once every two or three years. Staff will also encourage participants to continue building relationships and sharing information after the program concludes.
 - **Lessons Learned and Next Steps:** In the coming years, staff will continue to facilitate capacity building in the organizations that receive Community Grants Program funding by supporting the remainder of the Community Grants Cohort meeting series that began in FY 2022-2023 and inviting AC members to continue assisting with project management or technical analysis or provide other relevant guidance to applicants and grantees.

2) AC Process for Developing Equity Guidelines. As presented to the Board in the last update, staff is working with the Advisory Committee Ad Hoc Subcommittee for Equity to create Equity Guidelines (formerly referred to as “Equity Framework”) from which staff can create 5-year work plans for the remainder of Measure AA. Input from the Subcommittee led staff to change the method of gathering feedback from EDCs. Instead of asking representatives of CBOs to comment on a guidelines document, staff planned to request their input in-person at Community Outreach Sessions (detailed in the “Preview of FY 2023-24” section).

3) Networking Sessions. Staff hosted four virtual networking sessions by region in 2022 to continue to reach more CBOs 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 CBOs to have more informal conversations to see if Authority funding would be a fit for the organization’s projects. Participants appreciated the opportunity to connect, and shared the feedback that they would like these sessions to be held in-person and on the shoreline in the future.

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 2023, the seventh round of grant materials followed a similar template, with a few significant updates. The changes to the grant program materials included:

- Expanded Definition of "Greatest Positive Impact" Criterion: Now includes list of most relevant regional and subregional plans to cite and an explanation of "Contributions to landscape-scale ecological characteristics" (pp. 6-7, Footnote 5)
- New Prioritization Criterion: "Demonstrate a serious effort to engage California Indian Tribes" (pg. 8)
- Expansion of "Likelihood of Success" Criterion related to Partners and Coordination: The criterion that was previously called "Project’s level of community involvement and benefits and/or innovative partnerships" has been expanded to include Tribal engagement and coordination with local jurisdictions (pg. 11)
- New Application requirements (if applicable): a letter from the landowner confirming their willingness to host the project (if applicant is not the landowner); a letter from Tribal partners confirming their involvement.

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 and Cohort; 2) creating a process to develop the Equity Guidelines; 3) hosting Networking Sessions; 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. Community Grants Program and Cohort

AC Recommendation	Progress to Date
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. In the Community Grants Cohort, staff are supporting participants by bringing speakers from past projects and habitat restoration professionals and providing training on grant management.
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 five 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 provided Brower Dellums with technical assistance to develop their San Leandro (Lisjan) Creek Community Project, which will establish their long-planned communications hub for the larger San Leandro Creek Greenway vision.

2. AC Process for Developing Equity Guidelines

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.
2.1 Seek more diverse and accurate representation on the Authority’s Advisory Committee, Citizen Oversight Committee and on the Governing Board.	Staff recruited new Advisory Committee members who better represent the diverse communities in the Bay Area and who are focused on advancing equity. With the regular recruitment round and additional round focused on environmental justice applicants, five more ethnically diverse members joined the committee for a total of nine.
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.

3. Networking Sessions

AC Recommendation	Progress to Date
1.1 Adopt Guiding Principles of Building Trust and Fostering Partnerships	Staff are working more closely with CBOs 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 virtual networking sessions in 2020-2022. Staff plan to host networking sessions as part of Board tours moving forward. 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.
1.5 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.	The Authority has visited these communities through Board tours and Community Grant Cohort site visits. Staff are working on striking a balance, having observed the capacity burden these visits place on partners.
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 a landowner to strengthen each other's concurrent applications, the former bringing community engagement experience, and the latter bringing habitat restoration experience.

4. Updating Grant 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

	<p>proponent. In the consultation, staff provide an assessment of whether the project is eligible for Authority funding. If so, staff provide advice on which issue(s) to clarify or emphasize in the full application. If the project is not eligible for Authority funding, staff provide suggestions on how it could be modified to become eligible.</p>
<p>1.4 Amend scoring criteria to show stronger nexus/relationships with EDCs.</p>	<p>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 EDCs.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>Staff created this document in 2020 and posted it on the website.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>The grant application has always included a checklist. The checklist was edited in 2020 to improve clarity.</p>
<p>1.9 Simplify language and phrasing in Measure AA communication materials.</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>1.10 Enter all funded and potential EDC projects into EcoAtlas as a project hub.</p>	<p>Staff have been involved in helping grantees enter their projects into EcoAtlas and providing EcoAtlas/Project Tracker training 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.</p>
<p>2.3 Develop a second, separate application track for small community groups.</p>	<p>The Authority has created the Community Grants Program, which provides a separate application pathway for projects led by CBOs in</p>

	EDCs. Thus far, the Authority has funded five Community Grants across three regions of the Bay Area.
2.7 Require or encourage project applicants to engage communities with a focus on disadvantaged communities during or prior to the design process.	Applicants are encouraged to describe the community support, involvement, and benefits for their projects, and describe how the project will approach community engagement.
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 still need to be addressed:

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.
 - Through the community outreach sessions and equity guidelines development we will seek more opportunities to integrate community input into our grant process.

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 and Preview of FY 2023-2024 Equity Work

In the coming year, Authority staff will continue to be guided by the equity recommendations until the Equity Guidelines are adopted; 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 continue 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. 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 year in consultation with the AC’s Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Equity, after we have gained more experience in working with community-based organizations in EDCs and have more examples to share in our communications work.

We also recognize our responsibility to provide Tribes with equitable access to the Measure AA Grant Program under a separate process. Staff are therefore developing Tribal Engagement

Recommendations (formerly referred to as 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, and staff are currently engaging in outreach to Bay Area Tribes and Tribal organizations. 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.

As mentioned previously, the Advisory Committee has recommended to the Governing Board that staff work on developing a long-term Equity Guidelines for the agency. The guidelines should include values, guidelines, actions, best practices and indicators or metrics to evaluate progress and effectiveness. Staff and the Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Equity will continue to seek Advisory Committee input on the Equity Guidelines in FY 2023-24, and then present them to the Governing Board in 2024.

In the summer of 2023, staff hosted community outreach sessions to obtain feedback from community-based organizations to inform the development of the Equity Guidelines. With guidance from the AC Ad Hoc Committee on Equity, staff framed the outreach around how to make the Authority’s funding more accessible to the organizations. With all the in-person events happening over FY 2022-2023, including Board tours visiting many of these same areas, staff will be combining Networking Sessions with Board tours moving forward, to alleviate capacity burdens on both community-based partners and Authority staff.

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