



MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 16, 2025

TO: Advisory Committee
San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority

FROM: Sara Haugen, Grant Program Coordinator
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San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority

SUBJECT: Evolution of Grant Round Materials

Staff is providing this overview to the Advisory Committee (AC) of the changes made to the annual grant round materials and scoring guidance to date.

Background

Since the first grant round in 2017, the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority (Authority) Request for Proposals (RFP) and grant round materials have been updated regularly to reflect the needs of the region, and to incorporate lessons learned from prior grant rounds. Staff has also incorporated feedback from the Advisory Committee, environmental justice leaders, and other partners.

In 2018, after the completion of Grant Round 1, staff provided more clarity on the eligibility of acquisition projects and projects that use mitigation funds. Staff detailed eligible acquisition projects and additional requirements such as meeting fair market value. Staff explained that Authority funds could be used for projects that make use of mitigation funds, but the Authority's funds must pay for incremental improvement beyond mitigation requirements.

In 2019, staff focused on how to better serve economically disadvantaged communities (EDCs), evaluate projects that propose beneficial reuse of dredged material for restoration, and improve efficiency for collecting performance measures data. Staff hired an equity consultant to find ways to improve the grant program, and in the meantime extended the application due date, and added references for meaningful community engagement. Staff provided guidance for beneficial reuse projects, including clarification that the application needs to be tied to a specific restoration site and describe the ecological benefits of using dredged material at the site. Staff increased efficiency of collecting Authority performance measures data up-front, by adding form fields to the grant application that allowed data to be downloaded in one file.

In 2020, staff simplified the grant round materials and used findings from the equity consultant's 2019 report to make the grant program more accessible for a broad range of applicants, including organizations from EDCs. Some examples of these changes were combining the content of the Grant Program Guidelines with the RFP, providing an optional Pre-Application and consultation with staff, adding evaluation of meaningful community engagement and benefits to EDCs into

the scoring criteria, and providing an application checklist in plain language. In July of 2020, the Governing Board approved [Resolution No. 69](#) to create the community Grants Program, separate from the competitive grant round, specifically for community-based organizations serving EDCs with a rolling application process and increased technical support.

In 2021, staff made minor edits to the grant materials for clarity and brevity. That year, Grant Round 5 included an unusually large total funding request of approximately \$56 million for 18 projects. Instead of issuing a Request for Proposals in 2022 for Grant Round 6, the Authority relied on the 2021 Round 5 list of projects when developing a list of projects to recommend in Grant Round 6, in accordance with [Resolution No. 97](#).

In 2023, staff added clarifying points throughout the RFP and grant round materials. This included updating a footnote to include information about a project's contribution to landscape-scale ecological characteristics, a link to Best Practices for Tribal Engagement developed by the San Francisco Estuary Partnership's Wetlands Regional Monitoring Program, including Tribal engagement in the scoring criteria, increasing the indirect cost limit from 15% to 20% of the grant, requiring a letter from a landowner if applicant does not own project site, and updating information about regional plans and strategies.

In 2024, the main substantive updates included adding references to the Authority's recently adopted [Equity Guidelines](#) and [Tribal Engagement Recommendations](#), as well as reference to the need to ensure that public access elements of projects consider accessibility for people with disabilities.

Ongoing Efforts for Future Grant Rounds

This year, staff is not anticipating substantive updates to the RFP and grant round materials but has noted feedback from the AC for the application review process as it relates to our Equity Guidelines. Some AC feedback under consideration is to 1) provide reviewers with an updated [Equity Gap Analysis](#) map to identify areas that may lack funded projects and various project benefits, 2) assess usefulness of creating an EDC "heat map" layer that shows population density of EDCs and environmental justice communities, 3) consider more metrics for applicants to measure how they are benefitting EDCs, and 4) explore ways to gauge quality of claimed benefits being provided by grantees. Staff will continue to evaluate what AC feedback can be implemented. The [2025-2029 Equity Work Plan](#) has several detailed tasks related to improving equity and Tribal engagement efforts in Authority grant programs. A few tasks currently being implemented are:

- Creating an RFP outreach strategy tailored to reach equity gap communities, tribes, and projects that could help the Authority meet campaign goals.
- Providing a new grantee orientation that explains Authority grant requirements and next steps once a project is authorized for funding.
- Hosting public project tours that can be leveraged for networking among grantees and restoration practitioners.
- Collaborating with the Wetlands Regional Monitoring Program's People & Wetlands Workgroup to add social equity metrics to existing performance measures.

In addition, the Authority has continued the Community Grants Program, incorporating lessons learned from the past five years. So far, the Authority has awarded seven community grants to six community-based organizations in three of the Authority's regions: four in the East Bay, two in the West Bay and one in the North Bay. (One organization, Literacy for Environmental Justice

has received two grants, one for each phase of its ongoing Candlestick Point Stewardship Project.)

Staff appreciates the input and support of AC members in the evolution of the Authority's grant round materials and grant application process. Staff will continue to incorporate ideas from the AC, Board, and grantees on how to improve the Authority's grant programs.