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Subject: Council Priority 2: Technical Assistance and Capacity Building Update

Reporting Period: January 2022– August 2023

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Summary

In January 2022, The Strategic Growth Council took formal action to promote capacity building and increase access to critical State funding resources with a focus on the State’s most disadvantaged communities. With historic funding available at the State and federal government levels to tackle critical issues around Climate change and access to opportunity, this work is more important than ever. When the Council adopted a formal resolution on capacity building as a key equity strategy, both members of the Council and the public recognized that for the State of California to meet its commitments to addressing climate change in partnership with the State’s most vulnerable communities, California must adopt a whole-of-government approach and prioritize capacity building and technical assistance at two complementary scales:

- The State must transform the structural conditions from the *top-down* so that all communities, small and large, can participate and lead on climate actions.
- The State must support under-resourced communities from the bottom-up to gain equitable opportunity and access to tools to lead their own transformations.

Since the adoption of the Council’s resolution, every program within SGC has worked to respond to and implement this vision. Capacity building, technical assistance (TA), and community readiness are a central component to SGC’s 2024 – 2027 Strategic Plan. An update on specific actions is included as an attachment to this staff report.

SGC’s Community Assistance for Climate Equity program serves as a coordinating entity within SGC and across State government to support, promote, and implement TA and capacity building initiatives. In addition to managing the Regional Climate Collaboratives program (RCC) and several pilot initiatives (Partners Advancing Climate Equity, BOOST, and a new Tribal Capacity Building Program), CACE is tasked with developing and promoting the Technical Assistance (TA) Guidelines as directed by SB 1072 (Leyva, 2018). The TA Guidelines are intended to support the expansion of TA efforts in alignment with best practices and is an important way that SGC is implementing the Council’s resolution on capacity building. Since the CACE program brought the Technical Assistance Guidelines to Council for approval in August 2020, technical assistance at the State level has continued to expand.

CACE program staff have received numerous requests from State and Federal agencies for guidance related to providing TA and the 2020 Technical Assistance Guidelines Overview webinar has received nearly 50,000 views and is SGC’s most watched video. Staff has also offered presentations and trainings to State agencies on structuring and implementing TA and

requests for guidance on developing TA programs continue to increase. Recognizing the demand for guidance on the provision of TA as well as requests for additional sections and resources, CACE staff undertook an update of this guidance in 2023 to maximize the utility of the Technical Assistance Guidelines.

The 2023 Technical Assistance Guidelines update includes new sections on securing funding for TA, selecting TA providers and recipients, making the case for TA, reducing barriers within grant programs, and more. The web-based platform has also been redesigned and new case studies, templates, checklists, and other tools have been added to help program staff effectively design and implement TA. With this update, SGC hopes to build support for the growing number of State agencies and other funders who are offering TA and ultimately ensure more robust support and meaningful investment in California's most under-resourced and historically under-invested communities.

Background

In early 2020, SGC convened a Technical Assistance Work Group including staff from 13 State agencies to gather input from TA and capacity building experts whose work covers a variety of sectors and issue areas. SGC staff worked closely with this group, harnessing its broad experience with TA to ensure the guidelines were both relevant and applicable to a wide range of sectors, grant types, and community stakeholders. During this time, SGC also hosted listening sessions with representatives of approximately 40 entities, including local and regional government agencies, professional organizations, non-profit organizations, philanthropies, and community groups, to better understand barriers to achieving community-driven climate and equity goals. These conversations both informed the development of the Final Draft TA Guidelines and provided staff with information to help SGC enhance its own capacity building and TA activities.

For the 2023 update, CACE staff created a survey that was distributed to relevant interagency work groups for feedback on how the Technical Assistance Guidelines could be improved. Staff also worked closely with the HiAP Task Force Grant Programs, Contract and Funding Equity Work Group to gather input into the update of this resource. Additionally, CACE staff consulted notes gathered through conversations with state and federal agency staff over the years on the challenges they face when offering TA.

About the Technical Assistance Guidelines

Technical Assistance is a critical tool for advancing social and racial equity by increasing access to State funding programs and other opportunities for the California's most under-resourced and historically under-invested communities. By providing a roadmap for State agencies to implement effective and equitable TA and capacity building activities, the Technical Assistance Guidelines build the capacity of State agencies and other funders to advance California's equity goals and are a critical component of SGC's Racial Equity Action Plan.

SGC staff designed the Technical Assistance Guidelines in close collaboration with a workgroup of 13 state agencies. This resource is a step-by-step guide to follow when considering key elements of TA program design, including public engagement, building trust, developing

effective metrics for evaluation, and engaging in partnerships with trusted community-based organizations. The document offers guidance and best practices to support agencies in evaluating options, making key decisions, and avoiding pitfalls as they develop effective TA programs. The primary audience for the Technical Assistance Guidelines is State agencies seeking to implement TA for the first time or to refine existing TA offerings, but also has a broader applicability to federal agencies, regional agencies, and other funders and TA providers. These TA Guidelines may also help third-party TA providers and recipients better understand the State's TA processes.

While some sections of the document focus on implementing TA related to grant funding, most of the guidance is also applicable to TA that supports planning and policy implementation. The document also covers best practices for engaging community partners in the design of TA programs as well as guidance on program management, program evaluation, communications, and more.

Background on the Technical Assistance Guidelines Development Process

The first iteration of the Technical Assistance Guidelines was drafted by CACE Program staff, in collaboration with staff from 13 State agencies and departments (listed below) who devoted their time and expertise to informing and refining this resource through their participation in the Technical Assistance Guidelines Work Group.

- California Air Resources Board (CARB)
- California Department of Conservation (DOC)
- California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA)
- California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD)
- California Department of Public Health (CDPH)
- California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)
- California Energy Commission (CEC)
- California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA)
- California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CalOES)
- California Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR)
- California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA)
- California Strategic Growth Council (SGC)
- California Workforce Development Board (CWDB)

The 2023 update included feedback from various interagency work groups via a survey and was developed in consultation with the HiAP Task Force Grant Programs, Contract and Funding Equity Work Group. The CACE team, worked closely with SGC's internal Technical Assistance and Contract equity work group and in collaboration with legal and communications staff to update the Technical Assistance Guidelines

Next Steps

SGC's CACE team will promote the updated version of the Technical Assistance Guidelines through presentations and trainings to State agency staff and interagency work groups and will

continue to offer support to agencies as they develop TA programs. The CACE team also intends to develop one or more webinars to highlight the new and updated resources available within the Technical Assistance Guidelines.

Discussion Questions

- How are your entities incorporating a focus on capacity building within your efforts? How can the Technical Assistance Guidelines support those efforts?
- Given Governor Gavin Newsom's direction to focus implementation of State and Federal resources across California, what are ways that the State can continue to lead and innovate to support community readiness?

Attachments

Attachment A: SGC Programs: Council Priority 2 Updates

