

STAFF REPORT: PRIORITY OUTREACH PROJECTS

Summary

This report provides a summary of two near-term priority outreach projects proposed to support current and future grantees under Public Resources Code Section 75072¹.

Recommended Action

Authorize staff to encumber Proposition 84 planning and monitoring funds for the following priority Outreach projects:

- SGC Funded Planning Efforts: Understanding Approaches and Best Practices for Successful Implementation: \$50,000
- Funding Wizard, Phase 3 Enhancements: \$50,000

Background

Core components of the Council's mission as described in SB 732 include identifying and reviewing activities and funding programs of member state agencies; providing, funding and distributing information to local governments and regional agencies that will assist in developing and planning sustainable communities; and recommending investment strategies to encourage the development of sustainable communities.

In March of 2010, the Council authorized planning and monitoring funds encumbered as part of the Proposition 84 Sustainable Communities and Planning Grants and Incentives Program. The purpose of the funds include sponsoring projects that support outreach to grantees, state agencies and departments, and local governments and regional agencies involved in advancing regional and local sustainability efforts. These funds have supported a number of outreach projects as outlined in the December 2013 staff report on [SGC Outreach Initiatives – Update on Existing Efforts](#).

Following Council action in December 2013 to reprogram \$1.15 million of remaining funds (as noted in the [Proposition 84 Planning and Monitoring Reprogramming Staff Report](#)) and approval of three data projects (see the [Priority Data and Information Projects Staff Report](#)), a balance of \$765,000 remains to fund planning and monitoring efforts that support the program.

December's Outreach Initiatives Report identified an updated list of areas of high-priority outreach concepts including:

¹ [PRC §75072](#). Up to 10 percent of funds allocated for each program funded by this division may be used to finance planning and monitoring necessary for the successful design, selection, and implementation of the projects authorized under that program.

1. Sustainable Communities Planning Grantees Education and Collaboration Program
2. Promote Local/Regional Collaboration to Implement Sustainable Communities Strategies (SCSs)
3. Technical Assistance to Rural Governments
4. Funding Wizard #3 - Promoting State Grants and Incentives
5. UrbanFootprint Training and Education

Since developing the report, SGC staff has identified two near-term priority projects to support current and future grantees. These two projects respond to items 1 and 4 listed above. Both are designed to build upon prior progress and further enhance the capacity of regional and local governments to implement the projects envisioned in their planning grants.

SGC FUNDED PLANNING EFFORTS: UNDERSTANDING APPROACHES AND BEST PRACTICES FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION (APPENDIX A)

Background: To date, the Council has awarded over \$50 million of the \$66 million allocated in local assistance funding for the Proposition 84 Sustainable Communities Planning Grants and Incentives program. Another \$16 million in funding is expected to be awarded at the SGC June, 2014 meeting. Thirty-eight of the 92 current grantees are creating or updating a specific plan or corridor plan that will result in foreseeable construction. These plans are being designed to lead to implementation that builds communities, neighborhoods and corridors consistent with Sustainable Communities Strategies and California's Planning Priorities. Others are working on climate action plans, general plans, land use policies, and models. These efforts will also be useful in moving communities toward implementation, but are not the subject of this study.

Need: The grant program has been very successful in encouraging local and regional governments to meet the challenges of developing physical land use plans that transform communities and create long-term prosperity. The development of good plans for the physical built environment cannot be underestimated but their potential is unfulfilled if they are not implemented. There is a need to see Council-funded physical plans move forward toward implementation. Twenty grantees who have been preparing these plans should have completed proposed work by September, 2014. By engaging with these grantees, this project seeks to consider the likelihood that grantee plans will come to fruition; the timeframe that might be involved; the obstacles and barriers they face; and what local, regional and state government can do to reduce or eliminate obstacles; and promote and support implementation.

Justification: This project would serve the immediate purpose of helping these grantees estimate their implementation probabilities and assist them with the removal of barriers where possible. It would provide important information about the planning grant process and how future planning grant programs could be optimized for success as California's 58 counties, 485 cities, and 18 MPOs will continue to need planning assistance in the future, whether from the SGC or other state institutions. Results from this project would advise the SGC as to the characteristics of the funded physical planning

projects that are on a trajectory toward built implementation, and provide useful insights about the primary barriers and promoters involved in the success of implementing grantee's plans.

Recommendation: Staff recommends that the Council authorize staff to issue a request for proposals or an interagency agreement(s) for consultation not to exceed \$50,000 for services to:

1. Design and conduct surveys, interviews and focus groups to gather information from Round 1 planning grantees to understand the status of their work in its progress toward implementation;
2. Examine compiled information to determine similarities and outliers in grantee progress toward implementation based on specifically defined critical action steps;
3. Detail barriers experienced by grantees that delay implementation, providing proposed solutions;
4. Describe the effects of supportive settings and actions that are moving plans toward implementation and success;
5. Propose local, regional and state actions to be taken to lower or remove barriers, and;
6. Recommend methods for optimizing future planning grant programs to incentivize planning that leads toward near-term implementation.

FUNDING WIZARD – PHASE 3 (APPENDIX B)

Background: The Funding Wizard is part of the CoolCalifornia.Org web portal. This internet tool serves as a public clearinghouse of state, federal, local, and other financial incentives developed to support local government work on sustainable communities' efforts. The Funding Wizard is now an active and engaging part of the web portal. As the second most popular tool on the site, it received 21.5% of all site traffic in 2013. It brings together sustainability focused financial incentive programs from various sources into one searchable database. On average at any one time, the tool contains approximately 1,400 grants, incentives, and rebate opportunities.

Funding Wizard User Highlights:

- Tool usage continues to increase: 9% of site visits in first 12 months to 22% of site visits in 2013
- 63,477 visits May 2011 to January 2014
- 11,260 visits to Funding Wizard portal pages in 2013

Following the initial investment by the California Air Resources Board (ARB) in 2008, the Council approved funding further development of this tool in September, 2010. The \$125,000 "Phase 2" allocation enhanced the tool by expanding the searchable topic list, improving data collection, and enhancing the user interface to help grant applicants find resources to plan for and implement sustainability activities.

Need: To assist cities and counties, small businesses, schools, state agencies, non-profits, regional entities, and the general public with identifying grants, loans, tax incentives, technical assistance, rebates, and other opportunities to finance energy efficiency, green transportation, renewable energy, water efficiency, waste reduction, green building, and other sustainability projects that can contribute to greenhouse gas emission reduction goals and support SGC's sustainable communities objectives.

Justification: ARB's CoolCalifornia.org web portal continues to receive their board's approval to support, upgrade and maintain the portal. Nearly \$1.7 million has been allocated by ARB for portal development and outreach campaigns since 2007. In 2014, ARB plans to introduce a fully upgraded and re-designed site; and will continue to assign multiple office staff to support, maintain, and promote CoolCalifornia's programs including the Funding Wizard. In addition to ARB's internal commitment, their collaboration with several state agencies, utilities, non-profit organizations, and academic institutions for support of the site's programs has resulted in nearly \$400,000 in direct funding, as well as immeasurable in-kind support and staff resources.

Through the Council's continued collaboration with the ARB and the California Natural Resources Agency, additional funding of the Funding Wizard would support promotion and enhancements of the tool to:

1. Conduct training and education for state agency and department grant administrators to demonstrate the tool's value to staff and grantees, and the ease of using the tool's "+Add" feature to self-populate information about upcoming funding opportunities.
2. Further enhance the user experience with a more dynamic search interface and roadmap for local governments to plan, develop and implement sustainability programs.
3. A review and expansion of the tool's analytics to establish a baseline and track increases in users based on the engagement, training, and outreach efforts.

Recommendation: Staff recommends that the Council authorizes the SGC to issue an interagency agreement with the ARB in the amount of \$50,000 to partner in their efforts to deliver: 1) Engagement, training, and outreach; 2) Tool development to enhance the user experience; and 3) Expand analytics and metrics to track overall success.

APPENDIX A: SGC Funded Planning Efforts: Understanding Approaches and Best Practices for Successful Implementation

The Strategic Growth Council's (SGC's) Sustainable Communities Planning Grants and Incentives Program has been successful in encouraging local and regional governments to meet the challenges of creating land use plans that transform communities and support long-term prosperity. The development of good plans for the built environment is unfulfilled if they are not ultimately constructed. The design of these plans will lead to implementation that builds communities, neighborhoods and corridors consistent with regional Sustainable Communities Strategies and California's Planning Priorities. There is a need to see SGC-funded plans move through implementation to permitted projects that embody the goals and objectives of the original plan. This project will observe how certain Round 1 grantees realize the development proposed in these planning efforts.

To date, the SGC has awarded over \$50 million of the \$66 million allocated in local assistance funding for the Proposition 84 Sustainable Communities Planning Grants and Incentives Program. Thirty-seven of the 92 current grantees have received \$21.4 million to create or update specific plans and corridor plans that will result in foreseeable construction.

| Project Type | # of Projects | | | Award Amounts | | |
|-----------------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| | Round 1 | Round 2 | Total | Round 1 | Round 2 | Total |
| Corridor Plans: | 11 | 10 | 21 | \$7,430,499 | \$6,230,990 | \$13,928,489 |
| Specific Plans | 10 | 8 | 18 | \$5,621,060 | \$3,919,818 | \$9,807,878 |
| <i>Both Elements:</i> | 1 | 1 | 2 | \$1,000,000 | \$742,500 | \$2,009,500 |
| Total Plans: | 20 | 17 | 37 | \$12,051,559 | \$9,408,308 | \$21,459,867 |

SGC funded 20 grantees in Round 1 to prepare land use plans focused on development of a transportation corridor or a specific area. These projects are scheduled to complete work by September 2014.

This proposal seeks to engage these grantees to consider:

- How plans will come to fruition?
- What are the expected timeframes for development and construction?
- What challenges will need to be addressed when attempting to construct planned development?
- What people or polices will support and promote planned development?
- What local and state government actions might reduce or eliminate challenges, and support these efforts?

This project will describe grantees' experiences in the following efforts as they move from preparing the plan toward plan construction and project development.

In order to achieve the outcomes noted above, a contract in an amount not to exceed \$50,000 will be executed through an RFP process to conduct research, coordination and analytical tasks that include:

- Designing and conducting surveys, interviews and/or focus groups with the 20 grantees to understand their projects and their implementation efforts. *Grantee participation is voluntary.* Determining the potential for establishing indicators that can be used to identify a plan's potential for implementation.
- Describing grantee progress toward implementation based on identifiable critical action steps.
- Determining challenges that delay grantees in their progress toward implementation and proposing solutions to those challenges.
- Detailing prominent policies that move plans to implementation and success.
- Identifying local and state actions that could be taken to reduce or eliminate challenges, and support or promote efforts that move plans closer to development.
- Recommending processes for optimizing methods for future planning project selections that lead successful plan implementation.

The project will result in a final deliverable comprised of:

- A report listing the path Round 1 grantees are taking toward implementation developing plans outlining grantees.
- A detailed report outlining the challenges, as well as the resources and polices supporting the plan's construction and recommendations for action that local and state government can take to move plans closer to implementation.
- A recommendation for policies and guidelines to use for optimizing project selections leading to plan implementation.

TIMEFRAME

Council approval in March 2014 would result in an agreement for work executed by June 30, 2014. Work would commence in July 2014. Final deliverables would be completed December 2014.

APPENDIX B: OUTREACH PROPOSAL - FUNDING WIZARD, PHASE 3

The Strategic Growth Council (SGC) understands that awareness of and access to financial incentives and opportunities for planning and implementing sustainable programs and policies is paramount for cities, counties, and regional agencies to achieve their vision of becoming more sustainable, as well as complying with the State's sustainability and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction goals.

Part of SGC's mission is to:

- Identify and review member agencies' funding programs, coordinating these opportunities to achieve SGC's seven sustainability goals, and;
- Provide, fund and distribute data and information about developing and planning sustainable communities to local governments and regional agencies.

Soon after the SGC was established, it partnered with the California Air Resources Board (ARB) to achieve one of the Council's primary objectives - to assist in meeting the State's AB 32 goals. ARB's Initial Scoping Plan¹ points to the CoolCalifornia.org web portal as an important tool for changing behaviors to achieve greenhouse gas emissions reductions. The portal was developed in 2007 as an early action measure to provide multiple audiences with useful, reliable, trusted, and digestible information and tools that encourage daily actions to combat climate change. The Funding Wizard is a tool that links recommended actions with financial incentives as a mechanism to accomplish the goals of the portal.

The Funding Wizard serves as a public clearinghouse of state, federal, local, and other financial incentives that support local governments and regional agencies working on sustainable communities' efforts. It brings together sustainability focused financial incentive programs from various sources into one searchable database. This active and engaging tool contains user-friendly features and visual details that make it attractive to all audiences. In 2013, it was the second most popular tool on the site, receiving 21.5% of all site traffic. On average, the Funding Wizard includes approximately 1,400 grants, incentives, and rebate opportunities in the entire database.



SGC's partnership with ARB began with the Council's support of Phase 2 of the project in 2010, allocating \$125,000² in outreach funding to expand and enhance Funding Wizard's capabilities. These funds supported extending the tool's searchable topic list to include SGC's sustainable communities objectives, improving data collection, and enhancing the tool's user interface. These improvements are increasing the tool's ability to provide potential grant applicants with funding options available to implement visions and plans and to finance actions and activities that result in more sustainable communities.

¹ California Air Resources Board's (ARB) 2008 Initial AB 32 Climate Change Scoping Plan

² Proposition 84 Sustainable Communities Planning and Monitoring funds

The proposal to fund Phase 3 of the Funding Wizard would continue efforts to enhance and promote the tool. Phase 3 focuses on training for SGC member agencies and departments, which will allow their staffs to directly populate the portal with available incentives that further SGC objectives and the state's GHG emissions reduction goals. Funding would also support further tool development and expanding the analytics and metrics to track overall success. Specifically, this project will support the following actions:

- 1) **Engagement, Training, and Outreach:** Develop an approach for promoting the tool to SGC primary audiences and increase the number of incentives provided through SGC member agencies and departments.
- 2) **Tool Development–Enhance User Experience:** Enhance the user experience with a more dynamic search interface and roadmap for planning, developing and implementing sustainability programs.
- 3) **Expand Analytics and Metrics:** A review and enhancement of the tool's analytics to establish a baseline and track increases in users based on the engagement, training, and outreach efforts.

Project Objectives:

- Implement department grant administrators' training to demonstrate the tool's value, and how to self-populate the portal using the "+Add" feature to input incentives.
- Create a more dynamic search interface and roadmap to feature financial incentives based on AB32 goals that users can refer to develop approaches or strategies that support their planning, developing and implementing sustainability programs.
- Develop, test, and report on efforts to improve the tool's analytics, better identifying the current users through measurements such as specific geographies, address types (e.g. org, gov, etc.), category searches, and additional queries.

FUNDING WIZARD USER HIGHLIGHTS

- Increasing user activity–
 - First 12 months of launch, tool generated 9% of site page views.
 - In 2012, the tool generated 14% of site page views.
 - In 2013, the tool generated 22% of site page views.
- 11,260 hits for Funding Wizard web pages in 2013 – 2nd most popular tool on site.
- Top Grant Entry for the month of January 2014: **Sustainable Community Planning Grant & Incentives Program**
- Top Referring Sites to the tool in 2013:

| | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ARB ▪ CalRecycle ▪ Ca.gov ▪ Climate Change Portal (climatechange.ca.gov) ▪ U.S. Small Business Administration (sba.gov) ▪ OPR ▪ CalEPA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ GoBiz (business.ca.gov) ▪ California Energy Commission ▪ California Dept. of Education ▪ Energy Efficiency Coordinator's site (eecoordinator.info) ▪ Institute for Local Government ▪ 350 Sacramento |
|--|---|

Funding Wizard 2013 Usage Summary - Page Views



OVERVIEW: CONTEXT AND HISTORY

California Air Resources Board's (ARB) first Scoping Plan, developed and released in December of 2008, highlighted the need for behavior change to achieve GHG reductions, and pointed to CoolCalifornia.org as an important tool in this process. CoolCalifornia.org was developed to serve multiple audience types with useful, reliable, trusted, and digestible information and tools that encourage daily actions to combat climate change. A financial resources "wizard" has been a key part of the goals for the site from the beginning. ARB is proud to have the Funding Wizard now an active and engaging part of the suite of tools available on the site. The Funding Wizard's user-friendly features and visual details make it attractive to all audiences. It is the second most popular tool on the site and received 21.5% of all site traffic in 2013.

ARB is committed to supporting the CoolCalifornia.org website funding, nearly \$1.7 million in research for portal development and outreach campaigns since 2007, including \$82,000 to develop phase 1 of the Funding Wizard. ARB recently spent \$35,000 on upgrades and maintenance for the top site tools – the Carbon Footprint Calculators for Households and for Small Businesses. For 2014, ARB is planning a full site upgrade and re-design expected to cost \$70,000. Multiple ARB offices including research staff, the Ombudsman's Office, and the Office of Communications work together to support, maintain, and promote CoolCalifornia.org programs such as the Cool City Challenge, the Small Business Awards, and the Funding Wizard.

ARB has collaborated with several state agencies, utilities, non-profit organizations, and academic institutions for support of the site's programs. These include the Resources Agency, the Energy Commission, Energy Upgrade California, Next 10, UC Berkeley, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, and Pacific Gas & Electric. To date, these partners have contributed nearly \$400,000 in direct support, not to mention in-kind support and staff work that is immeasurable. ARB spent three years and \$300,000 working with a public relations firm to develop marketing materials, outreach plans, and innovative marketing campaigns. Through our collaborative work, past and current research, ARB is well poised and excited to lead outreach efforts for the Funding Wizard and support the maintenance and growth of the tool.

ARB looks forward to working with SGC and other key partners to further disseminate the Funding Wizard as well as other tools and resources on the CoolCalifornia.org portal.

Tool Development Partners:

- UC Berkeley
- Next 10
- California Natural Resources Agency
- CalRecycle
- CalFire
- UC Davis
- Lawrence Berkeley National Lab
- California Energy Commission
- Governor's Office of Planning and Research
- Strategic Growth Council
- California Workforce Investment Board
- Energy Upgrade CA