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SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITITES
PLANNING GRANT AND INCENTIVE PROGRAM

PROPOSITION 84
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

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Link to Guidelines:

http://sgc.ca.gov/docs/Grant_Guidelines_and_Application_2013_Solicitation.pdf

FUNDING SPECIFICS

Q   How much is available for the grant program this cycle?
A   Approximately $16 million

Q   What are the minimum and maximum amounts that will be awarded per individual grant?
A   The minimum amount that will be awarded is $50,000. The maximum amount is $500,000. The Council will consider requests for up to $1,000,000 for a joint proposal, which is an application submitted by one lead applicant with one or more eligible partner entities, coordinated by a planning activity(s) with defined shared outcomes.   Partial funding may be considered to fully maximize grant awards. Please see **Joint Proposal** in the guideline glossary for more information.

Q   When must the funds be expended?
A   Grantees have up to three years (from the start of work to final report) to complete the project.

Q   Are matching funds required?
A   Yes. The applicant funding request must include at least a ten percent match, including in-kind services. Leveraging other resources, which include other sources of funds, staff, or "in-kind" services. To see how to document matching funds, please the Sample Budget Proposal in Appendix E of the guidelines, or download the template:
http://sgc.ca.gov/2013_sustainable_communities_planning_grant_forms.html

NOTE: An exception to this matching requirement is made for proposals that apply for the Environmental Justice Set-Aside. Proposals for this set-aside do not have to provide the ten percent match.

Q.   At the time of application, does the proposal need to be completely funded other than the funds requested through the grant process?
A   No. However, if other funding sources have not been secured at the time of the application, a contingency plan should be provided describing how the applicant will proceed with the proposal if all necessary funds to complete the proposal are not secured before the grant agreement is executed. All matching funds must be secured before the grant agreement can be executed.

Q   Will applications be ranked and funded based on the applicable Focus Area?
A   No. Proposals will compete for funding among all three applicable Focus Areas. Awards will be based on the highest scored proposals regardless of Focus Area.

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Q   **Will applications be ranked and funded based on the applicability as an Environmental Justice Communities (EJC) set aside?**

A   Yes. Proposals will compete for funding within the EJC set aside. The Council has established that the EJC set aside will receive up to 25% of the award funds. Thus the goal for this category would be $4 million. If there are not enough proposals recommended for funding for the EJ set-aside to account for 25% of the funding available for this round, the remainder of the set-aside funds will return to the primary funding pool.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Q   **What types of organizations are eligible to apply for this grant?**

A   SB 732 (the legislation which created the program) defines eligible applicants as cities, counties, metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), joint powers authorities (JPAs), regional transportation planning agencies (RTPAs), councils of governments (COGs), or combination thereof.

Q   **Is there a way for an organization that is not deemed "eligible" to apply for a grant opportunity?**

A   Not under current law. Entities not eligible to apply for a grant are able to partner with eligible entities as a sub-recipient, but cannot serve as the lead applicant. Collaboration, including partnerships, is highlighted in the guidelines as a priority.

Q   **Are federal agencies eligible to apply for a grant?**

A   No. Federal agencies are not eligible applicants.

Q   **Are special districts (school districts, water districts, transit agencies, etc.) eligible to apply?**

A   No. They can participate as a sub-recipient or participate as a partner.

Q   **Are non-profits eligible to apply?**

A   Non-profits are not eligible to apply. They may partner with eligible entities as a sub-recipient or participate as a partner.

Q   **Can eligible applicants be changed for future cycles?**

A   Yes, but only if the statute reflected in SB 732 is changed by the Legislature and signed into law by the Governor.

ELIGIBLE COSTS

Q   **Are costs directly related to the planning grant proposal, but incurred prior to the project award date or after the end of the grant performance period, eligible for reimbursement?**

A   No. Costs must be incurred during the grant performance period to be eligible. The grant performance period is defined by the beginning and end dates of the grant agreement.

Q   **If awarded a grant, will the applicant be able to use an overhead rate for personnel and/or employee?**

A   No. All eligible costs must be tracked (e.g., employee timesheets, invoices).

Q **Can awards be received in advance rather than through a reimbursement process?**

A No. Payments will be made only on a reimbursement basis. Advanced payments are not allowed.

Q **Is CEQA or an EIR considered an eligible cost?**

A Yes. This is a different policy from the previous two funding cycles. CEQA functions are considered eligible costs and costs incurred from CEQA may be considered "matching funds." Please note that a project applying for funding to pay for the CEQA process on its own would not be competitive for this grant. If you are considering proposing that CEQA be funded as part of your proposal, the proposal must meet the guideline's threshold requirements, priority considerations, and focus area intent.

APPLICATION & GRANT SELECTION PROCESS

Q **When are grant applications due and when will awards be announced?**

A A tentative schedule has been posted on the Council's website: www.sgc.ca.gov. Grant applications are due February 28, 2014 at 5 p.m. Announcements of awards are anticipated to made prior to the June 12, 2013 SGC Council meeting, and be approved by the Council at that meeting.

Q **Is there a limit on the number of applications each applicant can submit?**

A Yes. A lead applicant may only submit one application per cycle. However, a lead applicant may also: 1) submit a second application if it is for the EJC set aside and does not duplicate its first proposal and 2) be a sub-recipient in a Joint Proposal submitted by another lead applicant. The activities of each application cannot duplicate any other application.

Q **Can an applicant request funding for the same activity under different focus areas?**

A An applicant cannot request funding for the same activity twice within this funding cycle or for an activity that is already funded by another grant program.

Q **Can multiple entities submit an application for multiple similar activities?**

A Yes. Joint proposals allow for an application to be submitted by one lead applicant with one or more eligible partner entities, coordinated by a planning activity(s) with defined shared outcomes. For example, two or more adjacent cities can apply to create a specific plan for a transit corridor that spans their jurisdictions.

Q **How will grants be selected?**

A If deemed eligible, a grant application proposal will be reviewed, scored and ranked competitively by a scoring committee. The committee will make a recommendation to the council for approval. The Council must approve the awarding of the ranked grants.

Q **What if a grantee wishes to make changes or amendments to an awarded (approved) grant proposal?**

A The grantee must first obtain approval from the State. The grantee jeopardizes funding if changes are made without State approval.

Q **What is the best way to document organizational capacity, and is it for the lead applicant or the full partnership?**

A   Organizational capacity includes the capacity of the lead applicant and partners. To demonstrate capacity, please review the portions related to organizational capacity in the guidelines: Scoring Criteria (page 7) and Evaluation Questions (page 12).

Q   **Are letters of interest and/or letters of support viewed as a positive? Are they required?**
A   Letters of support from all relevant partners and supporters including government, NGOs, and businesses are encouraged, and in some applications, required. Please see page 3 of the guidelines, Threshold Requirement #3, for more information about this requirement and if it applies to your application.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMUNITIES (EJC) SET-ASIDE

Q   **Must the proposal be located within the geographic boundaries of an Environmental Justice Community to be eligible for the EJC Set-Aside?**
A   Yes. To qualify for EJC set-aside funds, projects must include all or part of at least one community that receives a score in the top ten percent (10%) of statewide scores using the CalEnviroScreen methodology.

Q   **If the applicant is applying for the EJC Set-Aside, is the applicant eligible to submit an additional proposal?**
A   Yes. An applicant of an EJC Set-Aside may also submit one additional non-EJC application.

JOINT PROPOSALS

Q   **What is the maximum amount of funding that a Joint Proposal may receive?**
A   The amount of funding awarded is $1,000,000.

Q   **In a Joint Proposal, do the lead applicant's sub-recipients submit individual budget forms?**

A   No. A single budget must be submitted by the lead applicant. The budget must describe the funds that will be distributed to partners and specifically identify activities which the sub-recipient will be paid.

Q   **Must partners within a Joint Proposal be located adjacent to, or within, the lead applicant's jurisdiction?**
A   No. There is no location requirement. Rather, eligible partners must be coordinated by a planning activity(s) with defined shared outcomes.

Q   **If we have multiple entities that are interested in applying for the grant for separate but related projects, is it possible to combine into one proposal? Or would they be better left alone as multiple proposals?**
A   If you can demonstrate applying jointly would promote greater collaboration, improve efficiency and produce better outcomes, it will be improve the competitiveness of your application. Strength of collaboration is a Priority Consideration in the Scoring Criteria. Up to five points can be earned in this category.

Q   **What is the responsibility of the lead jurisdiction with relation to multiple jurisdictions who are sub-recipients within the same grant? What happens if a jurisdiction does not complete**

their portion of the grant?

A The lead applicant is responsible for submitting reimbursements for its funded partners and the intended outcomes of the grant. If any partner, funded or not, does not complete part of the proposed work and jeopardizes grant outcomes, the State may begin grant termination proceedings against the lead applicant.

TYPES OF PROJECTS PROPOSED / COMPETITIVENESS

Q **Will a Sustainable Community Strategy, as defined in SB 375 which meets the goals of SB 375 and AB 32, be competitive?**

A To be competitive, proposals should address the additional Council objectives, i.e. public health, economic development, natural resource protection, etc.

Q **Will a General Plan update that seeks to include sustainability elements be competitive?**

A Although SGC recognizes that General Plan updates are for the most part, 'routine,' applications should not represent business as usual. To increase competitiveness, General Plan updates could include implementation activities (e.g. updating zoning ordinances and building codes) and other requirements (see guidelines for complete list).

Q **Can an applicant submit multiple plans under one proposal?**

A If a proposal has multiple plans, they must be closely related (e.g. targeted General Plan update with a Zoning Ordinance), specific plan.

Q **Must a grant proposal address all of the Priority Considerations to be eligible?**

A If a grant application does *not* address Priority Considerations it will not be disqualified. However, a grant application that *does* address Priority Considerations will be more competitive; the more considerations it addresses, the greater potential for scoring points.

OTHER

Q **Would it be beneficial for interested applicants and partners to attend the upcoming workshops provided by SGC?**

A Yes. DOC and SGC staff will provide background on the application process, and be available for more detailed questions. For more information on the workshop locations, dates and times, please review the workshop notice: http://sgc.ca.gov/docs/2014_Sustainable_Communities_Planning_Grant_and_Incentives_Program_Workshops_Notice.pdf

Q **Can applicants contact the SGC to make sure our application meets program qualifications and thresholds prior to submittal of our application? During the funding decision process?**

A As grant administrators for this program, the California Department of Conservation staff can provide additional information and feedback on potential applications. Please contact them at (916) 322-3439 or via email SGCSustainablecommunities@conservation.ca.gov for questions.

Q **If a non-governmental entity is writing the grant, must the lead applicant jurisdiction be the entity to upload the application into the FAAST program?**

A It is up to the applicant discretion.

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