

December 15, 2022

Subject: Community Resilience Centers: Policy Direction
Reporting Period: January 2022-December 2022
Staff Lead: Coral Abbott, Community Resilience Centers Program Manager

Summary

The Community Resilience Centers (CRC) Program received funds through the 2021-22 Climate Resilience Budget package and the Extreme Heat BCP in the 2022-23 State budget process. Chapter 574 (A.B. 211, Statutes of 2022), signed by the Governor in late September 2022, created additional program requirements that Staff have since incorporated into the Round 1 Draft Guidelines. SGC's Community Resilience Centers program will fund new construction and upgrades of neighborhood-level resilience centers to provide shelter and resources during climate and other emergencies. The program will also fund year-round services and ongoing programming that build overall community resilience.

As part of the public comment and review process, Staff are bringing two topics to the Council for discussion.

1. **Required Elements and Functions of Community Resilience Centers:** Staff have heard from some stakeholders that want CRC funds to build out full-scale emergency response and evacuation centers that are flexible to multiple climate needs. Staff have also heard from stakeholders that want CRC funds to serve fewer key purposes to withstand climate needs and do not meet comprehensive emergency needs, due to limited current impacts, size, and capacity constraints. **Should the CRC program only fund proposals that will equip communities to meet a multitude of emergency needs, or should the program also fund those projects that are more limited in their emergency response functions, but meet a critical present need?**
2. **Geographic Diversity:** Chapter 574 (A.B. 211, Statutes of 2022) requires that SGC must prioritize projects that represent the statewide geographic diversity, inclusive of both rural and urban communities, and incorporated and unincorporated areas. The current draft includes geographic diversity in the scoring and award recommendations process but does not define the term. **What are possible approaches to defining 'geographic diversity' for the CRC program, and how should staff reflect this in the program guidelines?**

Background

Officially launched in July 2022, the CRC program now totals \$270 million over two rounds of funding, intended for both planning and implementation activities, with \$110 million allocated for Round 1 and \$160 million allocated for Round 2. Staff anticipate that in Round 1 the program will award approximately 10 planning grants and up to 20 implementation grants. Staff have led a robust stakeholder engagement process to develop Round 1 CRC Draft Guidelines, recently released for public comment and upcoming public workshops. Staff anticipate presenting Round 1 CRC Final Guidelines for adoption in spring 2023, and then opening Round 1 CRC Applications in late spring 2023.



Required Elements and Functions of Community Resilience Centers

Per Chapter 574 (A.B. 211, Statutes of 2022), the CRC program has a statutory requirement to fund centers that "serve as community emergency response facilities and aid in building long-term resilience, preparedness, and recovery operations for local communities." Legislation further specifies that "eligible services and amenities" offered by community resilience centers can include, but are but not limited to:

- (a) physical infrastructure features like hydration stations, electric charging stations, backup power, cooling, clean air, respite, and
- (b) services to mitigate the public health impacts of emergency situations exacerbated by climate change, like community evacuation and emergency response, public health, and mobile health services.

The Round 1 Draft Guidelines intend to accomplish the first goal by setting minimum requirements for CRCs, thereby designing and equipping CRCs to respond to multiple climate-related and other emergencies, encompassing response to current conditions and preparation for projected climate impacts. Staff have already incorporated in Draft Guidelines services and programs that effectively build the social infrastructure needed for effective emergency response and strong community resilience.

The current approach ensures that CRCs can respond to multiple forms of risk. However, this approach may limit the development of smaller or less comprehensive CRCs in communities with an acute need to protect against specific immediate climate impacts, such as wildfire or extreme heat. This approach may also challenge viability of potential sites with size constraints, like in some urban communities.

Example: A rural agricultural community experiencing unprecedented levels of extreme heat and poor air quality, and a high percentage of homes without air conditioning or air filtration, wants to apply CRC funds to upgrade an existing community center to serve as a cooling and clean air center, but does not have the space or infrastructure needed to shelter people overnight, including cots, showers, and laundry.

Under the current draft guidelines, this project would be ineligible for CRC funds because the proposed facility is unable to respond to a variety of emergency needs, including mass sheltering, particularly for floods or wildfires. Yet this project would still meet a critical, immediate need for a community suffering from specific climate impacts which are projected to worsen.

Geographic Diversity

The Round 1 CRC Draft Guidelines state that SGC will prioritize projects that represent statewide geographic diversity but do not currently provide further definitions.

The CRC program focuses on building resilience to climate change at the neighborhood level. This approach includes developing physical infrastructure to shelter and serve residents during climate and other disasters. CRC will also invest in social infrastructure to build community resilience, such as workforce development, civic engagement opportunities, and other ongoing services and programs, adding considerations for how the CRC program should consider relevant geographies or regions.

Several programs at SGC and the Governor’s Office of Planning & Research (OPR) use defined regions in their guidelines or reports that vary depending on their programmatic and/or policy issue area. Examples of how other programs at OPR and SGC consider geography include:

- Fifth Climate Change Assessment Climate Regions
- Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) regions (used by AHSC)
- Community Economic Resilience Fund (CERF) [regions](#)

Other programs, like SGC’s Regional Climate Collaboratives Program, do not define specific regions but instead take a broad approach in considering geographic distribution of awards during application review.

Another approach CRC could take is to consider funding projects across a diversity of climate risks by ensuring Round 1 projects fund communities across the portfolio at high risk for drought, extreme heat, flooding, sea level rise, and wildfires.

Current CRC draft guidelines address scoring for geographic diversity by proposing additional points to projects located in and benefitting under-resourced communities, as directed by statute, and proposing additional points to projects from unincorporated and rural communities that meet the ‘under-resourced communities’ definition. However, this does not capture any other factors relevant to the program for considering geography.

Discussion Questions

1. Should the CRC program only fund proposals that will equip communities to meet a multitude of emergency needs, or should the program also fund those projects that are more limited in their emergency response functions, but meet a critical present need?
2. What are possible approaches to defining ‘geographic diversity’ for the CRC program, and how should staff reflect this in the program guidelines?

Attachments

None at this time.

