

April 26, 2023

Subject: California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force - Nominations

Reporting Period: October 2022 - April 2023

Staff Lead: Sean Kennedy, Special Projects Analyst

Recommended Action

SGC staff recommend that Council appoint the nominees recommended by SGC staff to serve on the California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force.

Summary

The California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force (Task Force) was established in the 2022 California Budget to develop recommendations to equitably increase access to agricultural land for food production and traditional tribal agricultural uses. Per the Budget, the Task Force shall consist of a regionally diverse group of individuals of up to 13 members to be appointed by the Strategic Growth Council in consultation with the CDFA Farm Equity Advisor and the California Truth and Healing Council.

In November 2022, SGC staff initiated a two-month public nomination process. The process was promoted via an SGC press release, established State public outreach channels, and targeted outreach to approximately 40 community-based organizations, advocacy groups, and academic institutions engaged in land equity across California. SGC received 26 eligible nominations. Nominations were reviewed according to the process shared at the October 27, 2022 SGC meeting with input from a six-person public member advisory panel.

Following the review, SGC staff has identified seven individuals to serve on the Task Force. An additional six members have been identified through State and State-affiliated entities, per the guidance in the authorizing budget bill language. The complete list of nominees, including summaries of relevant experience and expertise and designated position on the Task Force, is included in Attachment A.

Background

The Task Force builds on the State's commitment under the Farmer Equity Act AB 1348 (Aguiar-Curry, Chapter 620, Statutes of 2017) to ensure the inclusion of socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers in the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of food and agriculture laws, regulations, policies, and programs. On or before January 1, 2026, the Task Force shall submit a report to the Legislature and Governor that includes policy recommendations on addressing the agricultural land equity crisis.

Per the 2022-23 California Budget, the Task Force shall consist of a regionally diverse group of individuals of up to 13 members, including native and tribal liaisons, a land trust representative, individuals with expertise in issues affecting socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers, an individual with expertise in agricultural land acquisition and finance, State Board of Food and

Agriculture member, a farmworker representative, a beginning farmer, the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Farm Equity Advisor, and an individual from the CDFA BIPOC Farmer Advisory Committee that is currently being established.

Per the Budget, Members shall be appointed by the Council, in consultation with the CDFA Farm Equity Advisor and the California Truth and Healing Council and ensure that its recommendations further the objectives of the Farmer Equity Act.

Overview of the Nomination and Review Process

Applications were accepted on a rolling basis from November 1, 2022, to January 15, 2023. The Call for Applications was announced via an SGC press release and established public outreach channels, with accompanying announcements via the California Department of Food and Agriculture and the California Natural Resources Agency. SGC staff supplemented general announcements with targeted outreach to approximately 40 community-based organizations, advocacy groups, and academic institutions engaged in land equity across California.

Nominations for native and tribal liaisons were solicited through the standard nomination process, with final recommendations determined by the Governor's Office of Tribal Affairs. Representatives for the CA State Board of Food and Agriculture member and CDFA BIPOC Farmer Advisory Committee were nominated by those entities, respectively.

The review committee consisted of three members: SGC's Special Projects Analyst, the Office of Planning and Research's Senior Advisor for Land Conservation, and the California Department of Food and Agriculture's Farm Equity Advisor.

The review was supported by a six-member advisory panel comprised of members of the public who have expertise working with socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers and issues relating to land equity. The panel served in an advisory capacity to the state review committee, which retained final decision-making authority. Applications for the advisory panel were made available via the SGC website and communication channels and through direct outreach to the approximately 40 organizations mentioned above.

During the review, SGC staff identified a gap in representation from the Central Valley. In response, staff re-opened the nomination process to allow for additional nominations for individuals with experience with socially disadvantaged farmers in the Central Valley. The review of these nominations followed the process outlined above.

Members of the review committee and advisory panel were required to recuse themselves from reviewing any applicant with whom the reviewer has a substantial interest. Reviewers and advisory panel members were directed to consider the following, council-directed criteria when evaluating each submission:

- California Residency: Current California residency is not a requirement for Task Force membership. However, applicants residing outside California must demonstrate significant experience within the state.

- Participation in the Task Force will not generate a conflict-of-interest concern. Such a conflict exists if it is reasonably foreseeable that the decision will have a material financial effect on one or more of the applicant's economic interests.
- Ability to attend Task Force meetings and perform the stated functions of the Task Force.
- Experience or desire to advise agencies on how to achieve meaningful outcomes in agricultural land equity.
- Demonstrated commitment to elevating diverse and historically marginalized voices to achieve equitable outcomes in land equity and related issue areas.

Next Steps

A representative of the CDFA Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Farmer Advisory Committee will be selected and brought to Council for approval once that body is established. Finally, SGC staff are working with the advisory panel to establish a Technical Advisory Committee to provide additional technical guidance to the Task Force as appropriate. The nomination and review process of the Technical Advisory Committee is under development.

Recommended Appointments

SGC staff recommend that the Council appoint the following individuals to serve on the Task Force:

- Native and tribal liaisons
 - Cheyenne Stone, Big Pine Paiute Tribe
 - Emily Burgueno, Head Seed Keeper, Iipay Nation of Santa Ysabel
 - Lawrence Harlan, Treasurer, Fort Bidwell Indian Community Council
- Land trust representative
 - Dorian Payan, Director of Holistic Land Relations at the Sustainable Economies Law Center
- Individual with expertise in agricultural land acquisition and finance
 - Liya Schwartzman, Senior Program Manager, California FarmLink
- Farmworker representative
 - Irene de Barraicua, Director of Operations, Lideres Campesinas
- A beginning farmer
 - Nathaniel Brown, Owner/operator, Brown Sugar Farm
- Individuals with expertise in issues affecting socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers
 - Lorena Iniguez, Ebby's Organic Farm
 - Nelson Hawkins, Founder, We Grow Urban Farm



- Ruth Dahlquist-Willard, Small Farms and Specialty Crops Advisor, UC Cooperative Extension
- State Board of Food and Agriculture member
 - Doria Robinson, Agricultural Industry Member, California State Board of Food and Agriculture / Executive Director, Urban Tilth
- The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Farm Equity Advisor
 - Thea Rittenhouse, CDFA Farm Equity Advisor
- An individual from the CDFA BIPOC Farmer Advisory Committee
 - TBD, pending formal establishment of the CDFA BIPOC Farmer Advisory Committee

Council Recommendation

SGC staff recommend that Council appoint these nominees to serve on the California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force.

Should the Council agree with Staff's recommendation, the following motion language is suggested:

"I move that the Council appoint the nominees recommended by SGC staff to serve on the California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force."

Attachments

Attachment A: California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force Nominees