

August 26, 2020

Subject: Community Assistance for Climate Equity Program: Final Draft Technical Assistance Guidelines for State Agencies

Reporting Period: August 2020

Staff Lead: Ena Lupine, Community Assistance Program Manager

Recommended Action

Approve the Technical Assistance Guidelines as directed by SB 1072 (Leyva) Legislation.

Summary

Recognizing the importance of technical assistance (TA) in meeting its climate and equity goals, the State of California enacted Senate Bill 1072 (2018, Leyva), directing the California Strategic Growth Council (SGC) to develop “Technical Assistance Guidelines for State Agencies” (TA Guidelines). The Final Draft Technical Assistance Guidelines for State Agencies (TA Guidelines) before the Council compile capacity building and technical assistance best practices from a variety of State agencies and serve as a resource for State agency staff seeking to provide TA for the first time, or to expand or improve their current TA services.

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 TA Guidelines build the capacity of State agencies to advance California’s equity goals and are a critical component of SGC’s Racial Equity Action Plan.

Background

In early 2020, SGC convened a Technical Assistance Work Group including staff from 13 State agencies in order 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.

In close collaboration with the work group, SGC staff designed the TA Guidelines as a step-by-step guide for agency staff 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 final document will also include a comprehensive appendix outlining specific considerations for providing TA to California Native American Tribes.

The primary audience for the TA Guidelines is State agencies seeking to implement TA for the first time or to refine existing TA offerings. Specifically, the document offers guidance and best practices to support State agencies in evaluating options, making key decisions, and avoiding pitfalls as they develop effective TA programs. These TA Guidelines may also help TA providers and recipients interested in better understanding 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 TA Guidelines do not dive deeply into any one step in the process of designing a TA program; rather they outline a variety of TA delivery and contracting models that may be best suited to the particular need addressed by TA. The document also covers best practices for engaging stakeholders in the design of TA programs as well as guidance on program management, program evaluation, and communications.

Five Main Sections Comprise the TA Guidelines

Core Principles highlights the key values and objectives that should guide all TA efforts. These core principles are critical to ensuring that TA and capacity building efforts result in equitable outcomes and generate long-term impact.

Nuts and Bolts describes the different types of contracting methods available to State agencies, as well as some contracting best practices from a programmatic perspective. It also provides guidance on project management for TA initiatives.

Evaluation offers guidance on how to implement effective evaluation for TA, providing a variety of options programs can adapt to different budgets and types of TA activities.

Communications discusses the importance of communicating about your agency's TA and capacity building activities and provides recommendations on how to work

with public affairs staff as well as TA providers, TA recipients, and evaluators to support the development of useful communications materials and promote compelling storytelling.

The appendices provide additional guidance and resources for implementing TA:

Appendix A: Tribal Technical Assistance Guidance offers a robust overview of important considerations and recommendations for providing TA to California Native American Tribes, as well as key definitions and additional resources to consult in order to better serve Tribal Governments. Due to the historical context and unique considerations related to state engagement with Tribes, SGC chose to dedicate a full appendix to this topic, rather than spreading this guidance across the document. *A Draft of the Tribal Appendix will be open for Tribal comment in summer 2020 and the final version will be added to the TA Guidelines in the fall (after the August Council meeting).*

Appendix B: Case Studies includes a curated compilation of TA program profiles that provide examples of diverse models of TA and capacity that State agencies have implemented thus far.

Appendix C: Resources provides a list of other helpful manuals, toolkits, and reports that provide more detailed information on topics addressed in the TA Guidelines.

Appendix D: Glossary

Appendix E: Acronyms

Additional Support for Agencies Interested in Providing TA

Following the Council's approval of the TA Guidelines, SGC will create a web-based toolkit including the TA Guidelines, formatted for readability and ease-of-use, a number of case studies highlighting various State-funded TA and capacity building projects, and other resources that can help inform the development of effective TA initiatives.

SGC views implementation of the TA Guidelines as an ongoing activity, therefore SGC's Community Assistance for Climate Equity team will be available to advise any State agencies interested in such activities and connect them with members of the TA Guidelines Work Group to access additional expertise and support.

Council Recommendation

Adopt the Final Draft Technical Assistance Guidelines for State Agencies.

Attachments

Technical Assistance Guidelines for State Agencies: Executive Summary

Final Draft Technical Assistance Guidelines for State Agencies

