

Date: January 26, 2022

Subject: Item 7 | Council Priority 2: Advancing Capacity Building as a Key Equity Strategy

Reporting Period: January 2022

Staff Lead: Kirin Kumar, SGC Deputy Director – Equity and Government Transformation

Recommended Action

Adopt a resolution to further promote and integrate capacity building across Strategic Growth Council and member agency initiatives

Summary

In California, communities facing existing inequities are often most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and other disasters and least equipped to prepare or respond. To address this disparity, the State offers an array of programs that enable communities and California Native American tribes to reduce local pollution and greenhouse gas emissions and implement projects and programs that increase equity and resilience. Communities know what they need to grow and thrive, but often do not have the same access to sufficient resources to engage in comprehensive planning or access competitive funding to build resilience. State-provided technical assistance (TA) is essential to ensuring under-resourced communities can access the tools, resources, and funding necessary to support equitable community-driven transformation.

Despite the value of technical assistance in supporting many communities to access funding resources, there are still many communities and California Native American tribes across California that lack the readiness to pursue grant funding to tackle these often complicated and integrated challenges. In fact, many communities across California are still in the early stages of navigating the various policy, planning, and funding landscapes; growing partnership networks and relationships across community organizations; developing up-to-date policy guidance; and building staff capacity to implement policy, systems, and environmental change. This reality was underscored as many of these same communities scrambled to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021 while also addressing unprecedented climate change impacts. With billions of dollars in State and Federal funding being made available to communities over the next several years to deliver on critical policy challenges, including the Governor's historic \$37B Climate and Opportunity budget, it is more critical than ever that the State support communities in building long term capacity to apply for these resources and implement effective projects in partnership with impacted communities.

Staff is recommending that the Council adopt a resolution that builds on the Council's past leadership by expanding a commitment to advance capacity building in order to

support more communities and California Native American tribes in accessing funds and implementing key policy initiatives. The resolution commits the Council to commit resources to identifying and implementing concrete and measurable actions to advance capacity building strategies with SGC's TA Guidelines and other TA and capacity building best practices. Further, following the adoption of the resolution, SGC would convene a cross-agency capacity building workgroup to track, implement, and advance this work on behalf of the Council.

Background

SGC has incorporated technical assistance a key strategy across programs since 2016, initiated by a pilot effort to support applicants to the [Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities program](#). Since then, SGC's TA efforts have grown to include several million dollars in TA investment across our own programs as well partnerships with agencies including CDFA, CNRA, CalSTA, and others. Over time, staff have found that while TA is critically important in enabling communities and California Native American tribes to access and compete for State funding, further capacity building is necessary to support readiness in many under-resourced communities across the State. In response, SGC created new capacity building programs including [BOOST](#) and [Partners Advancing Climate Equity](#) which have increased access to funding resources and grown effective community-led planning in under-resourced communities. In 2018, the State adopted [SB 1072](#) authored by Assemblymember Connie Leyva. SB 1072 calls on SGC to develop the Regional Climate Collaboratives Grant program and Technical Assistance Guidelines to specifically address disproportionate competitiveness for funding in under-resourced communities and California Native American tribes. Taken as a whole, SB 1072 represents a new legislative directive to promote capacity building as key equity strategy in California.

In 2020, the SGC Council adopted the [Technical Assistance Guidelines for State Agencies](#). The TA Guidelines compile capacity building and technical assistance best practices from a variety of State agencies and external partners. The guidelines serve as a resource for State agency staff to expand TA and capacity building efforts, furthering the objective of SB 1072 to increase access by under-resourced communities. SGC has also previously released for public review specific technical assistance guidance on serving Tribal communities and are working to finalize and adopt these guidelines in 2022. The Technical Assistance Guidelines provide clarity on the scope of TA and capacity building services, how departments can integrate these practices into their work, and the connection to health and racial equity. The Council's adoption of these Guidelines underscored the important role that TA and capacity building play across State government in advancing equity.

The impact of technical assistance, and increasingly capacity building as a state investment strategy, is well documented. [Evaluation of previous technical assistance](#) has shown that applicants who received technical assistance outcompeted those who did not, and these results were more pronounced in under-resourced communities. Further, recent evaluation of SGC's Climate Change

Investments Technical Assistance Program showed that applicants who received technical assistance performed better in competitive application processes than those who did not, and that TA and capacity building has been effective in increasing understanding of solutions to address climate change and increasing competitiveness for funding. Further, recent pilot programs led by SGC, such as [BOOST](#), demonstrate the value of targeted capacity building support in developing successful funding applications, community planning processes, and partnership development.

Several Council Agencies currently provide TA resources and are working to build capacity within under-resourced communities. For example, [CDFA's Climate Smart Agriculture Technical Assistance program](#), [CARB's Access Clean CA initiative](#), and [HCD's Homekey program](#). Capacity building as a strategy can take many forms including dedicated programs like those at SGC and CARB to help communities navigate the various funding opportunities available to them, as well simpler approaches that establish new skills, processes, and partnerships through existing funding and policy mechanisms. For example, SGC's Climate Change Research program requires academic researchers to co-apply with community organizations and non-academic institutions. This links the research to real-world policy and system change work at the local level while establishing long-term cross sector partnerships.

However, not all funding programs are accompanied by TA or incorporate elements of capacity building as a strategy. This lack of consistency in the States' approach can perpetuate challenges faced by communities in accessing critical resources and building the long-term readiness to pursue funding and implement projects.

In working to implement the TA Guidelines and encourage development of new TA and capacity building programs across State agencies, SGC's Community Assistance for Climate Equity team have begun to identify programmatic and administrative challenges that either make the provision of TA and capacity building difficult, or limit access by communities to funding programs. Like the Racial Equity Working Group formed after the passage of the Council's Racial Equity Resolution, a working group of staff across Council agencies would identify strategies to address barriers communities and California Native American tribes face in accessing state resources, while also supporting peer learning to elevate effective capacity building approaches. SGC has already initiated these conversations over the past year, including cross-agency work groups to inform the development of the TA Guidelines and the Regional Climate Collaboratives grant program.

Council Action

In summary, under-resourced communities and California Native American tribes are experiencing the impacts of climate change, housing affordability, and the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately. The same conditions that have led communities to be more vulnerable to these compounded issues, have also led to these communities often not having the resources, plans, and relationships in place to access State funds to address those vulnerabilities. With billions of dollars in State and Federal funding to recover, transform, and adapt resiliency measures, our

collective commitments to equity across the State call on us to ensure that funding is getting to the most impacted communities. Technical assistance, and more specifically, capacity building is a key strategy to ensure that communities have the necessary support to access critical resources in accordance with their unique needs.

This Council resolution would address this need via the following:

- Commit to integrating capacity building and technical assistance strategies into their Agencies' programs, policies, and practices;
- Commit to identifying and implementing concrete and measurable actions to advance capacity building, particularly for California Native American tribes and under-resourced communities;
- Commit to working with State Boards, Departments, and Offices to align and advance capacity building efforts; and
- Commit to using a minimum of one public Council Meeting annually as a forum to share capacity building best practices; lift up success stories; and active engage California Native American tribes, communities, and other stakeholders to gather public input on these items.

This resolution represents the necessary first steps to create more consistency and coordination across capacity building efforts; highlight the ongoing opportunities for communities to receive grant and policy readiness support; and align with legislative directives to expand capacity building statewide. Over a longer period, these actions will lead to new programs and strategies across agencies to support capacity building and ultimately ensure that under-resourced communities can access the necessary tools and resources to deliver on critical policy challenges.

Next Steps

SGC's Community Assistance for Climate Equity team will work with the Council to identify designees to participate on a Capacity Building Working Group and develop guidance around evaluating existing and potential opportunities to promote capacity building. Staff will coordinate with the working group to report back to the Council on an annual basis with an update on efforts across agencies, key outcomes, and next steps.

Council Recommendation

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

"I move that the Council Adopt a resolution to further promote and integrate capacity building across Strategic Growth Council and member agency initiatives."

Attachments

Attachment A: Statewide TA Assessment Findings: California Climate Investment Technical Assistance Program