

Attachment B: Round 1 Regional Climate Collaboratives Program Guidelines Memo

Background

Following the release of the Draft Round 1 RCC Program Guidelines on February 8, CACE staff held five workshops with the goal of receiving feedback on the draft that would then be used to update the final draft before taking it to the Strategic Growth Council for final adoption in April 2022. Four of the workshops were organized by broad geographic regions of the State, and one workshop was designed for a general audience. Workshop attendees included representatives from local and regional governments, nonprofits, academic institutions, community-based organizations, Tribes, and existing collaboratives throughout the State that have been formed for various initiatives.

In addition to the workshops, Staff held a 35-day public comment period to solicit written feedback on the draft. Staff heard from a mix of local and regional governments, members of existing collaboratives, nonprofits that operate across a larger geographic scale, Tribes, consulting firms, and academic institutions. Staff did not receive written comment from community-based organizations that operate at the community or neighborhood scale.

The following sections describe the major themes of feedback received at public workshops and via written comment, organized chronologically following the RCC Guidelines.

Round 1 RCC Program Guidelines – Summary of Changes

The table below summarizes the key feedback received during the public comment period and provides a description of how SGC staff propose to address the comments provided.

In addition to addressing feedback that would require major changes, staff made general refinements to the Round 1 RCC Program Guidelines to clarify applicant eligibility and due dates of deliverables, and the anticipated process for amending the scope of work and partners included during the grant term. Some of the feedback received will be more completely addressed in the NOFA, terms of the draft grant agreement, or during implementation. Staff are tracking and continuing to work through these issues to ensure applicants are fully aware of what will be required during the grant application and implementation periods.

| Feedback | How SGC proposes addressing feedback |
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| Funding amount: several comments came in requesting an increase in the max allowed funding amount (proposed in the draft to be \$500K – \$1M). | SGC staff have proposed an increase in the total funding amount to \$1.75M, making the new eligible range \$500K – \$1.75M. |
| SGC support in forming application teams: many workshop attendees expressed a desire for SGC to facilitate the formation of application teams. | Since SGC will evaluate applications, forming teams would create a conflict of interest for staff. SGC will work with Application Assistance TA providers to focus on helping |

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| | organizations to form application teams in regions across the State. |
| <p>Program Deliverables: SGC received a request to add the inclusion of a “Community Climate Solutions inventory” that includes the projects developed by Collaboratives that are ready to seek funding for planning or implementation.</p> <p>Similar feedback encouraged SGC to work with other agencies to prioritize projects developed by RCC grantees for State funding.</p> | <p>SGC included this recommended deliverable in the updated draft, and would intend to share with potential funders, to facilitate the process of applying to and implementing funds.</p> <p>SGC did not include language that would give preference or prioritization to projects developed by RCC grantees but aim to work with Council agencies’ staff to support and connect RCC grantees to funding throughout the grant term.</p> |
| <p>Eligible Costs: SGC received requests to include funding for more technical planning or costs associated with project implementation (demonstration garden, electric vans, etc.)</p> | <p>Given the nature of the grant as intended by statute, SGC is limited from providing funds for activities that move beyond capacity building into hard costs for emissions-reducing projects.</p> |
| <p>Eligible Costs: stakeholders expressed a desire to pay for interns and fellows using grant funds.</p> | <p>SGC updated eligibility to include payment for interns and fellows as a direct cost and noted that positions not on payroll should likely be hired through a consultant contract.</p> |
| <p>Region & Community Requirements: SGC was asked to clarify whether the Guidelines allow communities to be served that did not meet under-resourced definition, and for more clarity around the specific region size and definition.</p> | <p>SGC staff proposed that 51% of the census tracts served must qualify as under-resourced communities, in alignment with TCC. Staff additionally provided clarity that the region served must be 1-8 contiguous counties and clarified that the RCC definition of region may not align with other regional State initiatives.</p> |
| <p>Collaborative types funded by RCC: the Draft Guidelines proposed a separate category to fund ‘Collective Impact Collaboratives’ or the merging of 2 or more existing collaboratives within a region to maximize impact, with the intention to fund up to 3. Staff heard from a variety of stakeholders across the State that this limit was too low, and flexibility should be provided.</p> | <p>After an evaluation of the regions and stakeholder types that were concerned with the limits on funding for specific collaborative types, SGC removed the ‘Collective Impact Collaborative’ section entirely and instead included language stating an intent to fund both existing and emerging collaboratives. The scoring criteria have been updated and weighted to allow for collaboratives at varying levels of previous collaboration to compete for RCC grants.</p> |
| <p>Collaborative Stakeholder Structure: several comments reflected a desire for flexibility during the grant term to add or remove partners and to update the agreement.</p> <p>Many also asked for examples or best practices to support them during application development.</p> | <p>SGC staff intend to align with the TCC program’s processes that allow for partners to be added or removed during the grant term. Staff additionally proposed that applicants may set aside up to 15% of their budget to include new partners identified through development of the Action Plan, if desired.</p> |

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| | In addition to application assistance TA, SGC staff are developing a Resource Anthology that contains best practices related to collaborative development and management, community engagement, and other practices required or incentivized by the RCC program. |
| Eligible Applicants: stakeholders and State agency staff requested State entities, such as UCs/CSUs, conservancies, and regional commissions, be included as eligible applicants. | Per state regulation, funding provided to State agencies must be provided through an interagency agreement rather than in the form of grants and so cannot serve as the managing stakeholder but may be Co-Applicants. UCs and CSUs are exempt from this requirement and may serve in the role of the Managing Stakeholder. |
| Eligible Applicants: stakeholders requested clarity on whether organizations can apply as part of multiple applications. | SGC staff developed language specifying that applicants must demonstrate capacity to engage in all the grants they apply on, if awarded. |
| Grant Administration: stakeholders wanted SGC to ensure that the organizations with highest barriers to participating in state programs were prioritized for advanced payment. | SGC staff proposed additional language requiring Collaboratives to prioritize partners that experience low cash flow to receive advances. |
| Evaluation: stakeholders expressed concern over the logic model proposed in the draft for purposes of evaluating each Collaborative’s success, and also expressed concern about having to address possible evaluation strategies in the RCC application. | Staff removed requirements for applicants to provide an answer on proposed evaluation plans in the RCC application. Staff intend to ensure that the Implementation Assistance TA team has the necessary capacity and budget to serve as an evaluator for Round 1 grantees, in addition to providing other TA services. |
| Limited Waiver of Sovereign Immunity: Tribes and Tribal-serving organizations expressed that limited waivers of sovereign immunity should not be required by SGC when entering into any grant agreements with Tribes. | SGC staff determined that a limited waiver of sovereign immunity for Tribal applicants was not necessary and will not require any Tribes applying as Managing Stakeholder or Co-Applicant to provide SGC with a limited waiver. |
| Implementation Technical Assistance: more detail requested on what Implementation TA will support with, and how it is different than the TA provided by collaboratives themselves | Staff added detail to the guidelines on some of the components that Implementation TA providers will support on, namely: Collaborative management, peer-to-peer learning and trainings, and evaluation. |
| Scoring Criteria: stakeholders expressed a desire to see more weight given to communities and regions that are entirely or mostly under-resourced; and a desire for Project Need, Collaborative Stakeholder Structure, and Program Objectives to be most heavily weighted. | Scoring criteria were updated with weighted scores to reflect these priorities – Project Need, Program Objectives, and Collaborative Stakeholder Structure are all weighted the most in the scoring criteria. |

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| <p>Scoring Criteria: stakeholders requested flexibility to use outside data sources to demonstrate project need.</p> | <p>Guidance for Project Need scoring criteria was updated to encourage the use of data from other sources and provided a list of known sources used by SGC and other agencies as examples.</p> |
| <p>Application Process: stakeholders requested more detail on the application process and timeline.</p> | <p>Staff included additional detail on process and estimated dates. Additional detail and more specific dates will be included in the NOFA.</p> |
| <p>Geographic Distribution of Awards: stakeholders expressed a desire to see areas of the State that have applied to fewer climate programs and that experience higher barriers to participation, to be given preference.</p> | <p>No geographic targets were set in the Guidelines, but the scoring criteria and overall requirements are developed to ensure areas with high need, according to the criteria brought up by stakeholders, are able to compete.</p> |