



Establishing an Equity and Community Engagement Program that Benefits Economically Disadvantaged Communities

Final Recommendations for the San Francisco
Bay Restoration Authority

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Stakeholder Interviewees

Anthony Robinson, *Fathers and Families of San Joaquin*; LaDonna Williams, *All Positives Possible*; Terrie Green, *Shore Up Marin City*; Marquita Price, *East Oakland Collective*; Sona Mohnot, *Greenlining Institute*; Ana Alvarez, *East Bay Regional Park District*; Erika Powell, *San Mateo Flood Resilience Program*; Amanda Ford, *Riverford Consulting*

Focus Group Participants

Julio Garcia, *Nuestra Casa*; Roxana Franco, *Nuestra Casa*; Violet Saena, *Acterra*; Angie Evans, *Housing Leadership Council*; Kanyon Sayers-Roods, *Association of Ramaytush Ohlone*; Nakia Davis Pastor Bains, *Project WeHope*; Phoenix Armenta, *West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project*; Sarah Lee, *El Concilio*; Courtney Hill, *El Concilio*; Gloria Flores-Garcia, *El Concilio*; Lil Milagro Henriquez, *Mycelium Youth Network*; Ofelia Bello, *Youth United for Community Action*; Sonia Soans, *Shore Up Marin City*; David Chivers, *Shore Up Marin City*; Terrie Green, *Shore Up Marin City*; Pat Dodson, *All Positives Possible*; Askari Sowonde, *South Vallejo Advocate*; Dominique Brooks, *Rodeo Advocate*; Elissa Robinson, *Contra Costa Resource Conservation District*; Lonnie Mason, *Bayview Hunters Point Advocate*; LaDonna Williams, *All Positives Possible*; Tomishia Williams, *West Oakland Advocate*; Eric Bason, *West Oakland Advocate*; Pat Hudnall, *South Vallejo Advocate*; Danella Parm, *East Vallejo Advocate*; Janniece Murray, *East Vallejo Advocate*; Alexander Tavizon, *California Indian Environmental Alliance*

Executive Summary

Based on a thorough equity-focused assessment of the Measure AA grant program, and input from community leaders and equity experts, this report provides insights on what's missing from the current grant program, and recommendations on how the Authority can improve the program to intentionally include equity as a core component.

The goals and objectives of this equity assessment are to:

1. Identify gaps in the Measure AA grant program related to serving and engaging disadvantaged, or frontline communities¹.
2. Recommend approaches, strategies and actions for addressing those gaps.
3. Identify opportunities with the Authority's overall approach for integrating racial and environmental justice into its operations.
4. Provide strategies and recommendations on how to embed equity in the program that results in long-term benefits for economically disadvantaged communities (EDCs) and achieves the most equitable outcomes.

To achieve these objectives, EcoEquity Consulting conducted thorough desk research (including document and archival analysis), completed interviews with community stakeholders from April to June, 2019, and facilitated two focus groups in July, 2019.

Focus group discussions were prepared and organized to bring out a full range of community viewpoints aimed at resolving inequities in public funding programs, with a specific spotlight on Measure AA. Focus groups primarily involved representatives from low-income communities of color, including several community-based Environmental Justice (EJ) and Social Equity leaders. Desktop analysis included review of SFBRA documents as well as guidance from other grantmaking programs that have worked to center racial and environmental justice.

Community voices and input revealed the existence of significant barriers and perceived biases in the outreach and implementation of public funding and planning programs, including Measure AA. These barriers connect to a wide range of issues and aspects related to race, income, and other societal dimensions that impact and are perceived to prevent access to public funding opportunities, including Measure AA. Community leaders referred to political, financial, institutional, and cultural barriers standing in the way of equal opportunities and access for all in public funding and other agency-led processes.

A common viewpoint expressed by all focus group participants is the **relative lack of information on, understanding of, and clarity about the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority and the Measure AA grant program**. This report casts a spotlight on the multiple barriers standing in the way of economically disadvantaged communities from receiving information about this funding opportunity, and from accessing these public funds.

A major theme that became clear in this project through the experiences of underrepresented, under-resourced groups is a **deep, underlying lack of trust in any and all government-led processes**. The focus groups and interviews underlined the difficult position that primarily African American, Indigenous and

¹ <https://ecotrust.org/centering-frontline-communities/>

Latino populations find themselves in, and the shortage of genuine efforts from government agencies to meet these communities where they are in terms of cultural competency, language accessibility, and other forms of sensitivity required to genuinely engage this segment of the public.

Another finding that came through during engagement activities with community leaders, and was confirmed from the desk research, **was that the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority and other government agencies need to collaboratively produce region-, and/or state-wide shared guidelines and principles of outreach and engagement in EJ communities.**

Five Themes

While the literature, brainstorming session, phone interviews, and focus group conversations exhibited much nuance, some pronounced themes emerged. These themes were developed to correspond to the fundamental components of the grant program. This report explores the content and recommendations through the context of the following five themes:

Perceived Relevance (Communicating Measure AA)

Community experiences with government programs dedicated to ecosystem protection, restoration, land use planning, and other traditionally government-led programs of this nature are directly informed by the communication mechanisms and public education strategies these same government programs use. In order to foster a sense of awareness and perceptions of relevance for any audience, program staff must do a better job of understanding their audiences. When research participants were asked if they had heard of Measure AA, the vast majority answered they had not. Once the program was described in clear language, versus the more typical jargon-heavy phraseology aimed at science and agency audiences, participants unanimously agreed that Measure AA is indeed relevant to them and their communities. Cultural relevance is an important metric of success when it comes to communication. With many families in the San Francisco Bay struggling to meet basic needs, the strategies used to foster a sense of connection and relevance need to shift and be better tailored to these communities.

Barriers to Engagement

The recommendations presented under this theme focus on programmatic barriers which exist in the grant RFP, guidelines, and other systemic barriers exhibited by public programs of this nature. The barriers described herein are perceived by participants as intentional. These barriers not only appear to prohibit low-income, under-educated, communities of color from accessing grant information and funding, but moreover they prohibit these communities from having any decision-making power or agency over their own neighborhoods' assets and designs.

The recommendations presented in the Barriers to Engagement section explore the power dynamics between government agencies and the public, the concepts of "access to" versus "influence over," and "informing" versus "empowering," and discrimination against communities of color and black communities when it comes to sharing control.

Capacity Building and Investments

One of the biggest obstacles preventing low-income populations and communities of color from participating in government-led grantmaking programs has to do with their lack of capacity to fully engage in the government agency-centric processes in the way they are currently envisioned for disadvantaged community participation. Capacity refers to issues spanning from community awareness of government programs to the technical skills required to apply for funding and meet other administrative requirements. By working collaboratively to strengthen community and organizational capacity, advancing authentic participation, and building democratic power, it might be possible to alter current patterns of planning and funding inequities.

The theme of Capacity Building is two-directional, as it also explores agency staffers' level of education and understanding when it comes to emotional intelligence and trauma awareness when engaging EJ communities. If government culture shifts to one that values social intelligence, diverse representation, and cultivating relationships, instead of primarily prioritizing academic accolades, it would foster meaningful and lasting partnerships with community-based organizations, which would ensure sustainable investments.

Grant Funding Program Operations

Grant funding programs often solicit applications to address pre-decided goals, with little consideration given to the community's perspective and capacity to apply. These programs often do not account for the diversity of languages, experiences and skills present in potential community-based applicants. Recognition of community-based expertise and fostering trust/confidence in the grant operations and procedures on the part of community-based groups in community-led processes is paramount to an equitable and inclusive grant program.

A truly equitable program would exhibit an order of engagement that starts with a robust outreach and education campaign, followed by early and often engagement opportunities to inform program development and inclusion in decision-making procedures including grantmaking decisions. From the initial ballot vote to the program solicitation and implementation, an inclusive process means that all steps require community voices. The complete grant structure must be intentionally designed to ensure underrepresented perspectives are included.

SFBRA Representation

Public decision-making bodies are by nature intended to represent the communities their decisions impact. One criticism that repeatedly surfaced from the various conversations in this research had to do with the perceived bias exhibited by Authority Advisory Committee and Governing Board members.

Upon review of the list of individuals that make up these two decision-making groups, it becomes clear that the ethnic, professional, academic, and other socio-economic factors are somewhat homogenous when compared to the corresponding population. In order to ensure an unbiased process, it is of utmost importance that the diversity of Bay Area communities be reflected in the scoring and decision-making bodies.

Introduction

The concept of Social Equity in planning, policy and public programs refers to the fair and just distribution of societal benefits and burdens². For a publicly funded grant program to prioritize social equity, it must acknowledge historical environmental injustices endured by low-income communities of color. If the program does not already have social equity explicitly stated in the goals, vision and values at its inception, it must fundamentally adopt the goal of removing and rectifying preexisting, systemic inequities across the full spectrum of its operations, from forming a grant scoring committee, to developing an outreach strategy, and throughout the administrative reporting components.

Public funding opportunities and investments have historically overlooked low-income communities of color, which has led to several severely resource-deprived neighborhoods, even here in the wealthiest region of the nation. Such neighborhoods and communities throughout the United States have historically endured a disproportionate environmental and health burden from dangerous proximity to freeways and industrial facilities, lack of clean drinking water, sidewalks, or fresh produce. These overly polluted “hot spots” are commonly referred to as “Environmental Justice” or “EJ Communities.” It is incredibly rare to find a planning process where the residents living in these EJ communities have been invited to genuinely partake in, let alone become aware of, the decisions which have caused their families and friends to fall ill and pass away at astoundingly pronounced rates, even compared to communities located a few miles away.

The most fundamental tenet of a legitimate democratic society is that it draws upon ‘the power of the people.’ Every citizen should have the right to participate in public funding, policy and planning decisions, especially if the decisions impact their communities’ health and safety. It is thus the obligation of public agencies to develop equitable access to information and funding to ensure just distribution of societal benefits for all, especially those groups who have been deprived of public investment until now.

The Authority’s Governing Board, Staff and Advisory Committee (AC) members have expressed a strong commitment to recognizing and addressing the many injustices that have shaped the reality of low-income communities of color, and the Bay Area region as a whole. This commitment has been reflected in the Measure AA funding program’s prioritization criteria, which state that, “The Authority shall give priority to projects that... Benefit economically disadvantaged communities.”³

After receiving public comments from EJ community leaders on the lacking definition for “economically disadvantaged communities” in the draft guidelines, SFBRA staff and members of the AC worked on developing a robust and inclusive definition. In June of 2017, a definition was adopted and incorporated into the revised funding guidelines document. Since then, the AC and staff have continued exploring avenues to incorporate EJ principles and Social Equity operations into the Measure AA grant program structure. In September of 2018, Authority staff proposed to develop a community engagement program that would result in long-term benefits for economically disadvantaged communities. Staff invited the AC

² <http://greenlining.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Report-Social-Equity-in-California-Climate-Grants-Making-the-Promise-Real.pdf>

³ https://sta.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/STA/Groups/STA%20Board/Meeting%20Agendas/2017/09-13-17/11.Ba_Att%20A%20Measure%20AA.pdf

to form an ad hoc subcommittee to work with staff to develop a consulting contract that was brought to the Governing Board for consideration and approval for funding in early 2019.

This report summarizes the public involvement and community input activities carried out by EcoEquity Consulting, and presents findings that call for a new approach to supporting the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority's goals for achieving equity and inclusion in the Measure AA public funding process.

Methodology

To understand the scope of environmental justice issues and perceptions of inequity in the Measure AA grant program, data was collected from a range of Bay Area community members during the spring and summer of 2019. The data was gathered from community members through a number of mechanisms, including interviews, brainstorming sessions, and focus group conversations. While participant names and affiliations are included in the Acknowledgements section of this report, the report maintains confidentiality of who specifically shared which comments. Across all mechanisms of data collection, questions were consistently focused on the five prevailing themes listed in the Executive Summary.

Desk Research

In order to summarize the work completed to-date by Authority staff and the Advisory Committee, we collected, reviewed, archived and analyzed all relevant meeting notes and documentation of the discussions surrounding the grant program's environmental justice and social equity-related efforts. Grant guidelines, the RFP, and other supporting materials on the Authority's website provided a comprehensive frame of reference for the grant program structure from which to approach this assessment. Advisory Committee meeting notes and staff memos provided critical insights on how the Authority has engaged EJ community leaders prior to this assessment, including objectives resulting from those discussions.

EcoEquity also conducted a thorough literature review of existing scholarly articles, research, debates, and best practices concerning EJ and social equity in public planning and funding programs throughout the state of California and nationwide. Available literature from leading social and racial equity-focused justice organizations supplied a deeper awareness of the latest related efforts underway. The research presented in these reports revealed important concepts, effective research methods, and insights on the best practices for how to apply these concepts to real world problems.

AC Brainstorming Session

At the March 8, 2019 AC meeting, EcoEquity guided AC members through a brainstorming activity exploring potential short-term changes to the grant RFP to support more equitable outcomes for the program. We asked the group to focus on developing near-term recommendations that would influence the RFP timeline and other pre-scoring aspects of the process.

AC members provided several suggestions and stated numerous concerns on how to effectively integrate equity concepts into the grant program. A short-term list of recommendations was developed for consideration for round three, which is included in this appendix. The comments that pertained to longer term aspects of the program were condensed and incorporated into the strategy development for both the phone interviews with equity experts, as well as the focus groups with community leaders.

Equity Stakeholder Interviews

From April to June of 2019, EcoEquity Consulting reached out to equity leaders throughout the state of California to request input on how to better center equity and inclusion within the Measure AA grant program. Each participant was asked the same eight questions during 45 minute to one hour phone interviews with the lead Consultant, Nahal Ghoghaie Ipakchi. Participants were offered optional \$50 Visa gift cards for their time.

EcoEquity identified appropriate interview participants based on their unique and extensive backgrounds in equity-based work. Others were recommended by partners in EcoEquity’s broader network of EJ and equity leaders. While participants brought insights from various geographies, their perspectives regarding the issues of equity and inclusion in government funding and planning programs were fairly similar. Extensive notes were taken during interview, and key findings were summarized and integrated into the focus group strategy, and finally in the recommendations presented here.

Focus Groups

EcoEquity Consulting coordinated and facilitated two separate focus groups in two of the most impacted and vulnerable frontline communities in the Bay Area; East Palo Alto in San Mateo County (July 25, 2019), and South Vallejo in Solano County (July 30, 2019). It was of utmost importance to provide a space for participants to speak out without criticism of their comments, so groups were kept somewhat small, and did not exceed 16 participants each.

EcoEquity reached out to community partners at Nuestra Casa, an East Palo Alto-based immigrant and family services organization, to request their support with participant recruitment and event coordination. We also contacted All Positives Possible, an EJ community-based organization in South Vallejo to partner in the same capacity as Nuestra Casa. Both organizations accepted this invitation to co-host focus groups in their resident communities, which not only substantially enhanced our outreach efforts, but this partnership also ensured a more familiar and welcoming space for community participants to comfortably and transparently engage in this critical conversation.

Focus group gatherings were advertised to the community through word of mouth via email invitations and direct phone calls. The convenings were facilitated by Nahal G. Ipakchi of EcoEquity Consulting using informal questioning and inclusive conversation, which was documented via flip chart notes and typed minutes. Participants were offered optional \$100 gift cards or checks for their time. Attendees actively responded to the questions, which were structured around the five key themes described in the executive summary. Participants openly discussed their criticisms of the program, and co-envisioned strategies on how best the Authority can carry their recommendations forward.

Timeline of Community Input and Data Analysis



Findings and Recommendations

We organize recommendations in five thematic areas, which were collaboratively developed through the engagement process. These overarching concepts came up during the interviews and AC brainstorm, and were endorsed by focus group participants.

The summary lists seventeen recommendations. Each recommendation includes several tasks to support implementation. EcoEquity acknowledges that some recommendations have overlap across multiple themes. For the purposes of this report, we present each recommendation under only one of the five prevailing themes. The full compilation of comments and recommendations collected during the interviews and focus groups notes can be referenced in the Appendix.

Relevance Recommendations

- 1. Simplify language and phrasing in Measure AA grant materials. Phrasing and language of Measure AA can discourage smaller agencies and organizations from applying. The language needs to be concise and more inclusive.**
- 2. Hire communications and outreach staff with above average cultural competency and sensitivity towards low-income communities of color.**
 - 2.1 Seek applicants with the above skills who have either already worked in these communities, or are from these communities, and who are people of color.
 - 2.2 Staff should be resourced to regularly work with communities in-person and remotely to answer questions about the application process.
- 3. Establish a communications strategy that fosters relevance through better understanding needs and priorities of underrepresented community groups.**
 - 3.1 Commission a study to understand the language, messaging styles and communications strategies that appeal to grassroots organizations and other community-based groups.
 - 3.2 Provide cultural competency and community-based social marketing trainings to program staff, especially public-facing roles (communications, public information officer, etc.).
 - 3.3 Translate all information and outreach materials to the primary languages spoken in each county.
 - 3.4 We need to be mindful of people who can only read to a certain grade level or have limited access to Wi-Fi.
- 4. Require partnerships with locally-based community groups and organizations to carry out education and outreach efforts.**
 - 4.1 Community partners can effectively review and co-develop culturally relevant outreach materials to help understand the images or text that will work, as well as what will not.
 - 4.2 Outreach should be included within individual funded grants as well as an overarching priority for the program.

- 4.3 Work with community leaders who have already created a trusting relationship with the people in the community. Having people on the ground in these communities that sincerely care for its members and have relationships is important for the efficacy of education.
 - 4.4 Improve outreach efforts to include leafletting in EJ neighborhoods, leave flyers and table in neighborhood gathering spaces, conduct door-to-door canvassing in the primary languages spoken in the area, work with ethnic media stations, etc.
- 5. Clarify eligibility and application requirements, including geography, entity type, income levels, and examples of projects that have already received funding.**
- 5.1 Offer in-person workshops at libraries, community colleges, and other public spaces for community members to learn about the funding program and process.
 - 5.2 Provide multiple, inclusive, multi-lingual, interactive webinars for community-based prospective applicants to learn about the program and ask questions; get input from community leaders about the best way to share information from their community.
 - 5.3 Create a document with a basic template of what's expected of applicants, with examples of what a competitive proposal looks like, and how to implement the scoring criteria.
 - 5.4 Connect program benefits to community members' lives. It is not possible to expect this segment of applicants to draw the connections between their communities' top-priority issues, and the very technical descriptions of environmental issues covered by this grant.

Barriers to Engagement Recommendations

- 6. Promote intersectional engagement and emphasize projects that cut across disciplinary silos.**
- 6.1 Integrate social and racial justice principles by considering a broader range of subjects within the context of Measure AA's focus areas. For example, shoreline protection has implications for gentrification, indigenous acknowledgement, public health, economic opportunities, education, etc.
 - 6.2 Consider *community restoration* as a metric in efforts to "restore the Bay." Education, infrastructure and investment deficient communities are also in need of restoration. To achieve true equity, the Authority should consider funding youth empowerment and community education projects that will provide the tools to create innovative solutions to the problems Measure AA aims to address.
- 7. Reduce administrative burdens and reporting requirements wherever possible.**
- 7.1 Consider the true amount of time it takes for these smaller community-based groups to fulfill reporting requirements. The reporting burden can be disproportionately demanding when compared to the amount of funding received.
 - 7.2 Application and reporting forms should be presented in plain language that is accessible to broader audiences. Current application and reporting processes are confusing due to wordy diction as well as the narrow terminology used in the guidelines, leading to a lack

of inclusivity. Current government administrative processes are redundant, and require several tables showing budgets and expenditures, for example.

7.3 Application materials should include a checklist for the applicant with a roadmap/blueprint of what they need to have ready in order to fulfill the grant criteria written in plain and accessible language.

7.4 Diversify the application format to include visual and audio applications. Rather than a multi-page document with precise and complicated formatting. Many of the focus group members responded with strong positivity to the idea of a visual application. They expressed that alternative formats would support a more personal connection, and would provide equal or even greater information than traditional grant applications.

8. Establish a network or database that serves as a hub to facilitate connections between funding opportunities and grassroots organizations. A system that would encourage collaboration and integration with other regional efforts is needed.

8.1 Enhance funding operations and procedures by streamlining applications and general administrative requirements such as invoicing.

8.2 Increase accessibility and interactivity program website. Create videos, use catchy infographics, allow zoom calls for meetings, etc.

8.3 Connect staff from Measure AA with other funding opportunity staff, as well as prospective applicants to support with project idea development.

9. Develop a second separate application track for small community groups. Community groups should not have to compete against much more established organizations and larger agencies with the capacity and resources required to apply under the current process.

9.1 Consider equal access and opportunity. Community participants expressed a severe lack of justice and equal access in this aspect of the program. Government agency funding is often fully dependent on tax dollars. It seems unfair to have them competing for the same pot of funding as smaller community-based groups.

9.2 Rule out government agencies and other applicants from applying to the second track. On the basis of the definition of economically disadvantaged communities, the second track of funding should truly fully represent these communities.

Capacity Building and Investments Recommendations

10. Cultivate partnership development skills for agency staff to foster long-term relationships with community and build trust.

10.1 Train and hire staff in ways that will enhance the emotional intelligence, cultural competence, trauma awareness, and overall understanding of how to genuinely and respectfully work with grassroots community-based groups.

11. Prioritize building capacity of partners and applicants from historically underrepresented groups by offering technical assistance to support first-time applicants with navigating the process and eliminating barriers⁴.

- 11.1 Assess community-based organizations' technical assistance needs to related to the SFBRA funding and application process.
- 11.2 Grant programs should include diverse program partners with social equity expertise and offer technical assistance to ensure applicants from all backgrounds have the tools to submit a competitive application.
- 11.3 Encourage staff to engage in ongoing conversations with potential and current applicants/ grantees. This will support the goals of fostering relationships with communities.
- 11.4 Government staff or consultants hired by the government agency can work with prospective applicants on drafting proposals, understanding budget development, meeting invoicing and accounting requirements, and any other technical needs required to fully understand grant application and reporting process.

12. Include funding for education and trainings for community advocacy and governance.

- 12.1 Offer funding for community advocacy and governance capacity building trainings. Many community members do not fully comprehend how they can help with issues such as sea-level rise.
- 12.2 Develop a major education campaign around stewardship. This is required to empower future applicants from previously under-engaged communities. Provide or fund hands on workshops about the basics of community-based climate adaptation, including asset mapping, and other activities to engage future stewards of the Bay.

Grant Program Operations Recommendations

13. Organize and execute a robust community education campaign.

- 13.1 This program should have started with a broad community education campaign. Agencies must revise the order of procedures to include community education regarding bond measure programs, from before the ballot vote to program development and implementation.

14. Amend scoring criteria to incorporate community priorities by including social and racial justice principles into required criteria for project scoring.

- 14.1 Project applications should be required or encouraged to engage communities with a focus on disadvantaged communities during or prior to the design process. This could include additional points or criteria for community engagement as part of an application

⁴ <http://greenlining.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Report-Social-Equity-in-California-Climate-Grants-Making-the-Promise-Real.pdf>

or for local hire, NGO partnerships, etc.

- 14.2 Recognition of community-based expertise and confidence in genuinely community-led processes.
- 14.3 Larger agencies and non-governmental organization applications should describe specific strategies for workforce diversity and inclusion. Requirements such as having history working with local community-based organizations and hiring people of color can reduce dissonance. This can be prescribed by scanning LinkedIn profiles, contacting community leaders directly, and/ or establishing a network of community vouching.
- 14.4 Reevaluate budgets to allow the true cost of community engagement. Budgets should reflect a sensitivity to and understanding of the time and effort required to effectively conduct outreach and engagement in these communities. The time required to develop relationships, quell interpersonal and political difficulties, and identifying priority organizations and potential applicants is much more intensive than currently recognized by most public funding budgets.

SFBRA Representation Recommendations

15. Seek more diverse and accurate representation on the Authority's Advisory Committee, Citizen Oversight Committee and on the Governing Board.

- 15.1 Community participants would like to be more directly involved in the grant process including guidance, development, implementation and scoring.
- 15.2 Citizen oversight is an issue that has to be addressed. Community-based groups expressed a desire for higher levels of citizen oversight and more participation and representation in these decision-making processes. (moved down from 2.3)
- 15.3 Evaluate representatives' preexisting biases. Some community participants shared direct experiences of racism, where black community members have been rejected from serving on such committees.

16. Hold committee meetings throughout the subregions of the Bay Area to promote inclusivity and diversity of perspectives.

- 16.1 Endeavor to work with community partners on where and when to host meetings in EJ and underrepresented communities in all nine counties of the Bay Area region.

17. Reach beyond diversity for leadership roles by striving for truly inclusive staffing through the executive levels.

- 17.1 Inclusion and diversity are two different things. It's easy to achieve diversity with diverse staff working at the lower levels of the power hierarchy, but it's not as easy to achieve true inclusion at the higher levels of authority and power.

Next Steps & Conclusion

This report presents a broad range of recommendations to address gaps in the Measure AA grant program's consideration of environmental justice and social equity concerns. EcoEquity commends the Authority for commissioning this report to better understand community priorities and how the program can improve its engagement process.

The recommendations set forth in this report challenge the Authority to address and rectify historic discriminatory and unfair practices and policies that have caused inadequate representation in public decision-making and funding processes for low-income communities of color and tribal communities.

We urge the Authority to consider all of the recommendations presented herein in order to ensure a truly equitable program. We hope that this resource helps create policies that reduce barriers to social and economic mobility for all communities. Thorough adoption and robust implementation of these recommendations will require a long-term process, but we do encourage the Authority to begin making the more feasible changes quickly.

Appendix

Appendix A - Brainstorming Session Short-term Recommendations

Appendix B - Interview Summary Report

Appendix C - East Palo Alto Focus Group Notes

Appendix D - South Vallejo Focus Group Notes

Appendix A

Measure AA Equity Recommendations from AC Brainstorming Session

Round 3 – Short Term

Recommendation #1: Adjust timing of solicitation and add a letter of inquiry

- Letter of Inquiry prior to submitting grant application
- Extend grant application period from 2 months to 3 months
- Pre-grant round RFP and application trainings for CBOs

Recommendation #2: Adjust scoring to ensure community/EDC nexus

- Demonstrate Community Trust/ Relationships
- Invitation to resubmit application for qualifying CBOs
- Site/ Location review to assess community sense of ownership
- More robust way to secure genuine community buy-in
- Consideration of frontline communities (map or description)
- Two tracks for grant application process (EDC/CBO vs Others)

Long Term Recommendations to carry forward

- Partnerships with technical, administrative and programmatic support
- Participatory process for needs and benefits to be defined by community
- Clear verification of how process integrates with local community features and activities
- Refine metrics for "benefits"
- Include field tours (for projects that can't involve community volunteers)
- Partnerships with direct service providers to/ established relationships with unsheltered communities
- Strategy to ensure community connection isn't "manufactured"
- Partnerships with orgs & agencies with equity capacity
- Equity Policy

Appendix B

MEASURE AA EQUITY INTERVIEWS

ESTABLISHING AN EQUITY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM THAT BENEFITS ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

PREPARED FOR:

San Francisco Bay Restoration
Authority Staff and Advisory
Committee

PREPARED BY:

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Participant list:

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Amanda Ford – Riverford Consulting
Pandora Thomas – Urban Permaculture Institute
LaDonna Williams – All Positives Possible
Sona Mohnot – Greenlining Institute
Terrie Green – Shore Up Marin
Ana Alvarez – East Bay Regional Park District
Erika Powell – San Mateo Flood Resilience Program

“Race and income barriers are erased when communities can safely interact at their neighborhood park.” – Anthony Robinson

summary and methods:

From April to June of 2019, EcoEquity Consulting reached out to equity leaders throughout the state of California to request input on how to better center equity and inclusion within the SF Bay Restoration Authority (SFBRA) grant program. Each participant was asked the same eight questions during 45 minute to one hour phone interviews with the lead Consultant, Nahal Ghoghaie Ipakchi. Participants were offered optional \$50 Visa gift cards for their time. Extensive notes were taken during interview, and key findings are summarized here. While direct quotes are included herein, the majority of the content is integrated via paraphrasing, in order to reduce less relevant content, thereby ensuring a succinct and accessible report. EcoEquity identified participants based on their unique and extensive backgrounds in equity-based work. While participants brought insights from various geographies, their perspectives regarding the issues of equity and inclusion in government funding and planning programs were comparably congruent.

Next steps:

The key takeaways from these interviews will serve as a foundation for two community-based focus groups, which will take place in two marginalized and historically underrepresented communities in late July of 2019. This summary includes my interpretation of the key messages and critical points I heard from the group of participants. While responses exhibited much nuance, some obvious major themes emerged, which are listed below. Focus group participants will explore the following key concepts, and co-envision strategies on how best SFBRA can carry these forward:

- Importance of creating relationships with community,
- Need for intentional outreach and education;
 - Partner with community-based groups to conduct on-the-ground outreach,
 - Ask partners to review outreach materials to help understand which images or text will and won't work, and to help make it culturally relevant.
 - Improve language of outreach content itself to ensure it is easy-to-understand messaging
 - Translate to the primary languages in each county
 - In-person, dedicated, emotionally intelligent staff to conduct targeted outreach,
 - Webinars for people to ask and receive answers to their questions,
 - Workshops at libraries, community colleges, leaf-letting neighborhoods and door-to-door canvassing,
 - Speaking with ethnic media stations,
- Acknowledging the need for, and value of, projects that cuts across silos. Projects that include more than one issue beyond shoreline protection, such as; gentrification, indigenous acknowledgement, public health, economic opportunities, etc.,
- Need for capacity building at the grassroots community level,
- Need for technical assistance for underrepresented community prospective groups to apply for funding,
- SFBRA needs a citizen-based EJ sub-committee, to inform a more accurately representative advisory committee
- Required criteria for project scoring from the community's perspective, including local hire, NGO partnerships, etc.

1. PLEASE DESCRIBE YOUR EXPERIENCE WORKING ON EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN PLANNING, POLICY AND GOVERNMENT FUNDING PROGRAMS.

Interviewee 1: I've worked on equity and inclusion with international ministries, the federal government, state government, and at the neighborhood level. In most of these roles, I've worked to build strategies for communities to build policy advocacy skills.

Interviewee 2: I'm on Greenlining's environmental equity team, which focuses on addressing poverty and pollution in low-income and communities of color. Greenlining is a subcontractor for the Energy Commission's CalSEED program. We help the program with two main equity strategies:

- Equity In: Finding innovative ways to bring in diverse applicants from historically marginalized and underrepresented groups to help increase diversity and equity in the clean energy sector.
- Equity Out: Working one on one with many entrepreneurs who receive CalSEED funding to encourage them to include social equity in their innovations and focus on reducing environmental burdens in the most impacted communities.

Interviewee 3: I am a formerly incarcerated man who was paroled in the summer of 2018. I later joined the Fathers and Families of San Joaquin to learn more about social and restorative justice in my community. I had the opportunity to lead some EJ tours for CalEPA, which launched me into a community organizer position, where I help facilitate the process for communities can begin a transition in their way of thinking about equity and EJ issues.

Interviewee 4: I have lived in Marin City, a diverse community on the shoreline. I have spent several decades leading a number of community programs and initiatives that provide outreach and increase health awareness, community capacity and community governance amongst Marin City residents.

Interviewee 4 has vast experience in community development leadership including her role in serving on a number of community boards as president and vice chair and co-founding Marin City Charter School and ISOJI (Community Advocacy).

Interviewee 5: My work emphasizes the benefits of applying ecological principles to social design. I educate students and professionals on topics ranging from diversity, social justice, youth and women's leadership, to permaculture and sustainability. Some of my recent relevant projects include co-founding the Black Permaculture Network and leading a design team in Marin City for the Resilient by Design competition. Our team established the model for community engagement for the duration of the competition, and beyond.

Interviewee 6: My involvement in community includes grassroots work for water quality for women and children of color. I started my work in environmental health and justice through the Girl Scouts of American as a health educator and HIV Aids counselor. I was the first woman of color ever to serve in that role. I went on to work with the federal government on understanding equity issues surrounding the unique nutritional needs for Latino families frequenting food banks. I've focused on immigrant and Latino rights throughout the majority of my career.

Interviewee 7: In San Mateo County an average household income for a family of four of less than \$125,000 means that family is still struggling to survive. The maps don't qualify any neighborhoods in San Mateo County, so I am out there advocating for these communities. If we can't change the DAC formula, these high need communities can't even apply for DAC-specific funding opportunities. Since most of the communities that are impacted by flooding are at the downstream end of our watersheds, along our shoreline to the bay, we need to also plan for projects in the upstream parts of the watershed that can help to mitigate these impacts downstream. One thing that is prevalent is the competition for housing and transportation congestion with these flood mitigation projects. City councils and city managers have tough decisions to make. They have immediate needs to fund housing for example and flood infrastructure is often seen as a future need to address sea level rise, and not the annual flooding that some of these communities experience, often on an annual basis.

2. What suggestions or advice could you provide to government agencies to help them improve their outreach and engagement, to increase awareness of, and access to available funding in low-income and communities of color?

Interviewee 3: Organizations and agencies that fund and work on shoreline and habitat protection projects are often not very good at developing genuine relationships with the communities in which their projects are sited. The work is transactional versus relational, which has historically been the primary source of harm and trauma. Community members can sense the one-sided nature of these interactions from early on in the process, and decide not to engage in the program or project the government body proposes.

Interviewee 6: We tend to send funding announcements and related events to other funders, large engineering firms, and other typical players. It's rare to see a government program or funding agency send intentional invitations to grassroots, community-based and community-led groups. We need to usher them through the process and reintroduce them to the space, reminding them that they are valued in the planning process.

"We need to go from transactional to transformational; transforming and uplifting communities and not just the landscape."

Interviewee 4: One of the things we clearly need to do is educate the community about the opportunity. Bring in community orgs and have them be the voice to inform folks of the opportunity and educate them on how to get involved. Have many DACs that are affected by coastal waters – need to start targeting those communities right now. Wherever there are orgs dealing with CC and SLR – those are the orgs who will know how best to engage.

Interviewee 2: Greenlining is also trying to improve our outreach strategy for the I'm working on a similar problem with CalFed CalSEED program. In terms of outreach, we recommend doing more than emails and digital outreach. In person is much more successful. It's a much larger time commitment, so it's essential to have a dedicated staff to do very targeted outreach. Think outside of silos, and start partnering with groups such as; Economic development groups, vocational or trade schools, unions, faith-based organizations, coworking spaces, immigrant service centers, etc.

Interviewee 1: Government can increase access to their programs and other opportunities by including an equity specialist (a paid individual or team of individuals) to monitor how well the institution is abiding by its commitments. The ultimate goal should be to have equity as a line item in the agency's budget, ensuring there is funding available to go to specific under-served communities. Beyond that, agencies can create mechanisms and provide the required technical assistance to help communities develop a plan to continue working on solutions to the systemic problems, while enhancing economic opportunities and funding streams for themselves once government funding has run out.

Interviewee 7: In terms of awareness, having conducted outreach to many DACs on several projects throughout the Bay Area, I know this is not always an easy task and often a challenge for local governments because of time and money. That said, regional NGO's that can speak on behalf of multiple communities along our shoreline would be helpful. Anything that will enable or empower local residents to speak with one voice will always be beneficial and have a better outcome.

3. How could the SF Bay Restoration Authority better engage with underrepresented and disadvantaged communities?

Interviewee 3: In order to better engage with underrepresented and disadvantaged communities we need to go to these communities and directly interact with them. We can't go into these communities using the same techniques we use in other communities. We can't set a 250 page report in a community whose second language was English and expect a warm response. We need to empathize with the conditions in the community and make these presentations that we bring to them familiar and easy to understand.

"They've already created the lens, we have to use that link to show them."

Some ways that we can accommodate the unique needs of these communities is by replacing these long documents with a short and visual video, holding workshops in community parks to really show how much effort you're putting in to engage with the community, be trauma and behavior informed in order to better understand them, research the norms and mannerisms of the community in order to be more approachable and make people more comfortable, and form a relationship with the church in order to connect to the community in another way. All of these suggestions emphasize how important it is to empathize and use emotional intelligence when interfacing with these diverse communities.

Interviewee 1: The SFBRA should research and find out groups that are interested in what the grants can do for them, go to events that these groups attend, and engage them at that point. Starting with these smaller interest groups and having a presentation utilizing the "blast, ask, and task" structure ensures that people know what you'll provide for their communities. We need to

emphasize that this community will only benefit from the grant. Additionally, we should utilize social media and emails in order to connect with these communities both on and offline.

Interviewee 2: The SFBRA can utilize resources that already exist such as the Office of Planning and Research’s community engagement and outreach guidance document. This document can help the SFBRA understand how the government can empower communities, increase community ownership over efforts, include cultural consideration factors, as well as nuanced aspects of how to engage in terms of accessibility and timing. The SFBRA needs to show communities that their input is being used and give them direct examples of how their input is being applied. This process of community engagement needs to be “more of a two-way conversation and not extractive, but more of a partnership.”

- I recommend that the SFBRA use the California Environmental Justice Alliance’s (CEJA) SB 1000 Toolkit, which provides robust and comprehensive community engagement practices. The OPR document was developed by a government agency. This toolkit was developed by a statewide EJ organization that works more closely with underrepresented and disadvantaged communities.

Interviewee 4: It’s problematic when there are folks, who are supposed to be the community’s political representatives, learning about these opportunities, yet not doing the adequate outreach to include their constituents in disadvantaged communities. When this happens, it sends a clear message to the community, saying “We really don’t care about you.” There should be funding to pay community advocates to lobby decision-makers to make sure they are aware of community issues, and stop forgetting about them just because they can’t be in the room.

It would be great to have a subcommittee of the Authority itself with the sole task of community engagement, then bring that information back to the full body to ensure the community’s issues are adequately addressed. This subcommittee could then work with the application review team to engage in tours, and see the real issues impacting these communities, such as flooding and below standard quality of living.

4. Do you have experience with effective project labor agreements and/or local hire preferences that had a strong EJ component? How else have you seen this kind of work lead to more economic opportunities in DACs?

Interviewee 3: I’m passionate about workforce development and future opportunities to work on sustainable neighborhood planning. I’ve seen work with tree maintenance, park auditing, and park monitors that set up neighborhood parks which creates an intergenerational park team and community members who work together as ambassadors and representatives. I’ve seen some improvements in economic opportunities in DACs. For example, if you lie within a certain area of a park, you could be a local hire to keep the park sustainable.

“Where there’s Park Pride, there’s Community Pride.”

I think you can tell if a community is flourishing if their park is being used. There’re so many benefits that you can enjoy such as an increased feeling of community, resilience HUBs, and a location for preparedness events.

“Parks can galvanize the people and bring them together.”

Interviewee 4: Community-based organizations that I’ve worked with adhere to Hire First Principles in their community through education, employment groups and recreation centers. I’m happy to hear that Measure AA is looking for employment opportunities through the scoring process, especially for young adults.

When we look at who’s already working in this field, you don’t see black and brown people at any of the meetings or conferences (nationwide). This is the perfect opportunity to begin to bring folks in and show them that this could be a career opportunity for them. It will help them develop a strong sense of purpose, once they see how they can help their community and the whole county while also inspiring other black and brown youth throughout the nation.

Interviewee 1: I have experience as well as suggestions for how to hire local people and create more economic opportunities in DACs, especially in the context of environmental justice. Currently, we’ve been hiring people from the communities with a form with yes or no questions and a personal video. A CV or resume is optional. As for suggestions to create more economic opportunities, we should think outside the box in terms of how to hire locally starting with the application process itself. Instead of having a standard CV, resume, writing sample, and recommendations, instead we should have a more flexible process that is “trauma informed.” This means that the application process should be accessible through email, app, form, or paper and should include options such as videos and essays. We have to keep in mind that the people most qualified to talk about communities are the people from the communities. That’s why it’s so vital that we hire locally. The recruitment and application process of these jobs should match the standard of education that was provided for the community. In addition, it would be nice to remove name and gender bias by removing their names and photos from the applications if we continue to process applications the traditional way.

Interviewee 2: I recommend looking at the Program Guidelines for Transformative Climate Communities Program which outlines local hire preferences. Inside this is a huge emphasis on workforce development and increasing economic opportunities while preventing displacement.

5. What does a strong EJ community component look like in a measure aa funded project?

Interviewee 4: Projects that have a strong EJ component include several, not just one, staff members on the project from the community who are in leadership positions. These staffers should not only be educating their communities on the projects being developed, but they should also be advocating at a county, state and national level; advocating for all communities that look like theirs.

This would require at least one staff member dedicated to working with churches and faith-based organizations. The issues involve public health too, so projects should include a liaison working in clinics, as well as schools. There should eventually be a community-based staff member who can concentrate and master at least one specific and relevant subject area.

Interviewee 6: It looks completely different.

Adding an environmental justice community component to a Measure AA-funded project would change everything from how we interact with members of the community to how we conduct meetings. We would publicly message the entire Bay Area to ensure awareness and transparency, change the dynamic we have with organizations and agencies who are at the forefront of restoration, and how we include members of the community rather than interact with them in isolation through representatives from NGOs or communities working directly with cities.

Communication is key here in terms of sending out the broader message of “we understand and value solutions” and proving this by sharing our principles, visions, and acknowledgements with the general public. We also need to acknowledge that there are risks of displacement and gentrification that come along with projects like this, but we also need to communicate and reassure the people that we are working for them and doing the best we can to protect them from unintended consequences.

Beyond the community, we need to train the SFBRA staff in emotional intelligence. They might understand the concepts, but don’t understand the pain and don’t have the pain. They need to really understand what it means. Then the staff can be a tool to identify the potential issues with a project like this and how to mitigate these problems.

We also need to address the role that the community plays and the resources that they need to even care about the project. Having a workshop to train people on these issues before they can receive funding or start planning is integral in creating a movement and public support for a project of this caliber. We need to instill within everyone an “environmental justice/social lens” through which to view the world and create a sense of agency within them.

Once a project through Measure AA gets approved, local grassroots community leaders should team up with NGOs in order to delegate the large sum of money effectively. The top priority should be to limit displacement.

Beyond the scope of the project, we need to ensure the education of the FULL public is taken care of. We need to grow and usher in the next generation of environmental justice stewards. We can do this by using SFBRA funds to create a robust education system, translate videos about the Bay Area into multiple languages, and require interpretive panels for local languages in order to fully involve the entire public sphere.

6. How would you describe community benefits of a project in the application scoring process?

Interviewee 3: First we'd need to go through a community-based measure to ensure that the applicants are working to develop an environmental justice mindset in the community. It's also important to make sure that these applicants are following through with their responsibility to work with the community by checking in with the community. Going to the community directly and asking them to develop the scoring metrics would make the scoring more credible because "the person closest to the problem is the closest to the solution."

It's also important to look beyond the timescale of a singular human and ask if this project is sustainable 7 generations forward. Asking the applicants to describe in detail how sustainable the future will be and how they plan to restore the ecosystem and society in the future will ensure that their mindset goes beyond one species and is more about the ecosystem as a whole.

Interviewee 4: If the group applying is a multi-faceted and cuts across broader framing than what the Authority is tasked to address, they should have more points for the areas they effect. Folks that cross over, should get more points. Flood mitigation, employment, restoration, public health, and other issues that community cares about. Shows their holistic lens, which will be more effective to helping DACs.

- How does their work effect greater community – 101 shutting down will impact thousands of people, so anything that addresses this kind of event with ALL communities in mind, that should score higher.

Interviewee 1: Some necessary additions to the application process to ensure that the community benefits is for one making sure that there's indigenous acknowledgement and TEK from groups that are native to these areas. In addition, we need to ensure that the communities that use these areas are able to access them and that there are inclusive signs written in different languages to ensure accessibility. Some other suggestions include creating a stewardship program with the communities you want to benefit so that they can become a steward and instill within them a greater sense of ownership and therefore responsibility. If possible, it would be nice to have traditional names of trees, animals, and creeks worked in with the creation story to create a greater sense of belonging and familiarity.

Interviewee 2: The community benefits should be across multiple sectors, and should include community governance, health, and economic benefits amongst others. For community governance, applicants should discuss how they will work with communities to address community-identified needs. Applicants should also describe the potential health benefits from the project like addressing water contamination or using tree planting to sequester carbon and reduce pollution. The economic benefits should focus on job creation and job training to bring local folks into the community.

7. Do you have any advice or tips on how applicants can prove their project is consistent with climate adaptation planning and/or preventing systemic issues such as gentrification/Displacement?

Interviewee 1: In terms of climate adaptation, applicants need to make sure that climate impacts are translated so that the communities can understand the science behind the actions. For example, they can utilize infographics or short videos to illustrate scientific topics and make them action-focused. Beyond just communicating *to* the communities, they also need to ensure that they're communicating *with* the communities about the community's needs and wants. This is especially true when it comes to safety measures such as emergency and evacuation plans.

For preventing systemic issues, applicants could tie the project into the local housing or planning department. If they're applying for anything that has to do with helping buildings, they can set aside a certain percentage of the grant money for affordable housing. If you're getting a building that's already standing and going to be retrofitted, they can hire locally to ensure that all of the benefits are tied back to the benefit of the community at large.

Some more ways to make sure that the benefits filter back to the community is by offering the opportunity to apply to the grant to local communities first instead of outsourcing to applicants from outside the region. Another detail is to never waive environmental impact fees because these communities will be the ones to pay in the end.

Interviewee 3: If the project is focused on beautification and green space projects, we can create a community-building food garden where people can come and plant their own food to eat or sell. These edible forests create green spaces and jobs. One idea is to include public restrooms that are staffed by homeless people. And whatever is done to green the area, it is imperative that the goal is to build up the community and create jobs, not to create traffic in that area.

Interviewee 6: Applicants could vow to set aside some funding from Measure AA to make sure that interns from environmental science or other relevant fields, especially students of color, are involved with the project. This benefits the interns by helping them understand this project and create connections to the people working on the projects. This also symbiotically benefits the applicants by making sure they have an additional interface with the community through the interns.

Interviewee 5: Applicants from organizations and entities that might typically receive funding from SFBRA and other ecological health and restoration funding sources can also take some critical steps to ensure their projects are consistent with EJ and Social Equity issues. Some actions might include; hiring from the local community, setting aside funds for internal cultural competency trainings, invest resources for deeper research and training on community-driven planning, partner with community-based facilitators prior to completing the grant proposal to ensure community partners are included in the original budget. If a percentage of the budget is not set aside for true community leadership in the process, then the applicant should consider

starting with internal capacity building instead. This will initiate relationships with community partners for future funding proposals.

The Authority and Measure AA grantees can support eco-literacy and nature-based climate adaptation training for people in the community, much like what the Urban Permaculture Institute did with the People's Plan.

8. Is there anything we didn't discuss that you feel is critical to include in this process/ conversation?

Interviewee 1: We need to make sure that whatever is done is ultimately benefiting the community. This needs to be met according to the community's definition, meaning that you need to meet and talk to them to ensure that you're addressing their needs directly. The people applying for the grant money need to be mindful and informed to understand the indigenous and pre-1980 permitting and land rights issues and make sure that everyone is included.

Interviewee 7: Simply put, we need money for advocacy. People *will not* show up unless they have something to lose and when they do show up, they can make a difference. What we really need is someone with credibility to speak to and on behalf of the communities. This is the key when they're going in front of the city council or state representatives. This takes time and resources that these groups don't have.

This is an urgent situation. These communities are being impacted before everyone else, but don't have ownership of the projects being built. That's why these communities are in the greatest need of advocacy on these projects. I have lots of projects upstream of DACs that may mitigate their existing or future flood risk, but they may be small and don't look like they benefit DACs on the surface. This makes it tough to compete with other projects in the Bay Area shoreline that may be clearly within the State's definition of a DAC.

Appendix C

Measure AA Equity Assessment Focus Group Notes

July 25th, 2019

East Palo Alto, CA

GOALS/OBJECTIVES:

- Identify gaps in the Measure AA grant program related to serving and engaging disadvantaged, or frontline communities.
- Recommend approaches, strategies and actions for addressing those gaps
- Identify challenges and opportunities with the Authority's overall approach for integrating racial and environmental justice into its operations.
- Establish a community engagement program that results in long-term benefits for economically disadvantaged communities (EDCs).
- Make sure they're consistent with interviews, then we could use focus groups to reevaluate.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Is Measure AA relevant to you?

Community leaders believe that Measure AA is sufficiently relevant to address water quality, pollution prevention, restoration, and public access. Specifically, in pollution prevention there are current projects and programs that aim to establish clear connections between recycling and environmental as well as community health. A prime example is "The Clean Zone", an ongoing project in partnership with the East Palo Alto Police Department that provides a \$200 stipend for 4 hours of time. It was discussed that restoration projects are also apparent within the community but often they are reactionary occurrences. Restoration projects tend to focus on specific issues such as flooding but failing to fully capture the larger, ecological health and ecosystem services that are fundamentally affecting these narrower issues. Community leaders express that it is necessary to incorporate a layer of education and funding innovative/restorative solutions in order to grasp the full extent of restorative issues. A recommendation would be addressing and empowering the youth by giving them tools that foster innovation and creativity (i.e. Heirs to Our Ocean)

Barriers to Engagement

Increased transparency can greatly benefit the community as well as help the entire funding system operate more smoothly. A concern that was brought up was whether or not Measure AA is working with other funding streams. It was recommended that a large network should be established in order to help facilitate connections between funding authorities and grassroots organizations. For example, SF Bay Ventures has a database of funding authorities that can match them up to applicants. Another method

would be having workshops in which funding authorities can collaborate with applicants to increase transparency in the application process.

Extended funding from a 1-2 year period to a 5-10 year period can set aside additional time for organizations to focus on community engagement rather than applying for funding.

Reporting burden can be disproportionately demanding when compared to the amount of funding received.

Application process is confusing due to wordy diction as well as the narrow terminology used in the guidelines can lead to lack of inclusivity.

Increasing interactive and archival materials can help with community outreach and education. Videos, infographics, and zoom calls from meetings are helpful so the community has information to reference. Representatives from Measure AA can help by providing reviews of drafts.

Institutional organization for communities such as sharing contact information amongst the community and creating a listserv.

Outreach and Education/Language

Phrasing and language of Measure AA can divert smaller agencies away. The language needs to be simplified, concise, and more inclusive.

Community education prior to pushing funding is important because communities need to be informed about what their resources provide them. A recommendation is to organize a community education campaign.

Reorientation to rethink environmental issues as retracting to indigenous practices rather than simple acts such as “reducing trash”

People who are interested in getting involved can work themselves into standing communities because there is already a level of trust established. For example, organizations in Oakland are very involved through tabling which helps build relationships with communities.

Consider community engagement in budget as a way to reimburse community leaders for their input and time in meetings.

There are various projects for community engagement that are in different stages of development and have different amounts of funding. Examples of current projects include:

Flood protection projects: raising flood protection projects, improving public access, water quality improvement, wastewater management through natural processes

Projects do not have to meet all four criteria listed under Measure AA, they only have to meet one.

Most attendees at the focus groups haven't heard of Measure AA prior to the meeting. This points to the importance of community outreach and education, specifically, the focus group aims to understand Measure AA's relevance in the community, which helps change the conversation.

Capacity Building

Currently there isn't funding that supports capacity building alone because it usually has to tie in with a larger project that fits the criteria.

Government should give the same education and capacity building that they're giving their own staff to the community. Without providing these resources for the community, the inequity gap only broadens.

Scoring Criteria

Instead of agencies setting criteria, communicate with communities and change their criteria by meeting communities where they're at.

Requirements such as having history working with organizations hiring people of color can reduce dissonance. This ensures that EJ organizations are actually representing their communities and their values align with community empowerment. Recommendations can be to quantify diversity through percentages or scanning LinkedIn Profiles. Another approach would be to establish a network of community vouching.

A concern that was brought up was that larger organizations often cite East Palo Alto or EDCs in their statistics even though they don't actively participate in the efforts around the area. Defining community engagement through clear guidelines as well as a system of community vouching can help prevent this issue.

Come across funding but board is all white and there is no diversity but at the same time the work benefits the community. Has a diverse climate planning team but can't apply. Only responsibility for board is money and a lot of the time they put in their own money (get funding but at the cost of lack of diversity)

Create a more of a narrative/conversation rather than a systematic guideline (more qualitative criteria).

SFBRA Representation

Who is in the conversation in advisory committees and groups?

SFBRA is actively recruiting for people to be on the advisory committee. People who review Measure AA are a combination of staff and advisory committee.

Stay aware of the geography behind who is in the conversation, for example, East Palo Alto is vastly different than Oakland. Having meetings around the Bay can promote inclusivity and diversity of perspectives.

Agency Feedback

Recruiting a government funded grant writer on staff at agency can help increase transparency and ease the application process for applicants.

Set a criteria in job description for agency staff to be a liaison/advocate/champion for communities.

LOOKING FORWARD

Updates from Nahal about what she's doing and check in about how SFBRA can support, perhaps by providing a review of reports.

SFBRA is looking to recruit more people onto the advisory committee.

Consider options to make the focus group feel more community-led such as having meetings in nature, and asking the government to meet communities where their needs are.

FLIP CHART NOTES

Agency Feedback

- Government-funded grant writer on staff at agency
 - Criteria in job description for agency staff to be a liaison/advocate/champion
- After input event, agency should follow-up 1 x 1? To develop a project
- Before funding goes out, ask for community input
- Focus group still fitting into the box

Barriers to Engagement

- Siloed
- Coordination with other funding sources?
- Streamline funding applications
- Lengthen funding time (5-10 years not 1-2)
- Language tailored to community focused
- Enviro work dominated by white groups-not interested in partnering

- Still doing things the same way (power still in government hands, not interested in partnering with white groups-want to work with other groups of color)
- Trash-yes
- Promotoras community health connection-trash
- “Clean zone” program in E.P.A.
- Water quality improvement
- Restoring habitat
 - Not everyone’s priority, often have to be reactive instead of planning to restore indigenous plant life; utilizing traditional indigenous knowledge; need to consider impact of decisions (as a system)
 - Some reactive; prior to innovation
- Reach youth, creative, idealistic, not afraid of failing
- Issue areas relevant→ holistic perspective funding not reflecting that perspective
- “White people environmentalism”

Capacity Building

- Top priority, but no funding for this alone
- Empower youth
- Real coordination: b/w grassroots groups; between funders
- For agencies: How can they make funding accessible/take burden of coming to them from communities
- How do agencies → systems to meet community needs (go to meet community, don’t make community come to, adapt)
- Interactive materials/diversity
- Videos that describe process→ infographics
- Zoom calls helpful-do more than 1
- Work into community standing meetings/events/building relationships
- Outreach in communities-tabling
 - Go to community
- Activity include/outreach to LGBTQ, etc. communities

Outreach and Education/Language

- Language used to explain in AA was too technical/scientific/not accessible
 - Phrasing “puts you off”/ “white people and issues”
- Community education on the importance of what funding is addressing
- Need in community currently: education, capacity building, awareness, public communication spaces
- Community workshops-build relationships
- Connect to daily life (trash→ adds up in bay)
- Led by community
- Interactive materials/meetings
- Recorded conversations, voice recordings, presentations

- Who's the right person to talk to in EJ grassroots community
- Systemizing diversity isn't always accurate (Violet's comment @ Actera's board (white))
- Reporting burden/requirement/application itself
- Still fitting their boxes
- Meetings in nature/community places (time/location; limited time to listen)
- Lack of transparency
- Representation of all areas- not just past (geography of representatives)

Recommendations

- Paid community input to inform funding

Relevance (or lack) of Measure AA in your community

- Is there funding for community engagement process to ID projects? (Trying to build; cann apply for projects that include)
- What kinds of projects have been funded
- 4/14 have heard of Measure AA
- 2/4 knew about funding
- Community Education FIRST-why this is important
- How do we go through pre-processes to MAKE RELEVANT

Scoring Criteria

- Adapt for communities; informed by community needs
- Orgs that have staff BOD-primarily communities of color-how to prove that they are truly representing communities
 - Network of community vouching
- More qualitative scoring criteria
- Make sure projects that claim partnership benefits to communities
- Have letters of community support/call orgs to check
- No definition for community engagement
- Long term vs. short term solutions
- Long term investment communities
- Ensure entities work w/ local entities (don't have outside consultants then ask local groups to help)
- Community LED community engagement
- Include in funding budget \$ for community
- ? To attend meetings, follow up

SFBRA Representation

- AC members more geographically diverse (especially equity folks)
 - More equity chairs
- Have meetings around Bay to encourage representation of other areas.

Appendix D

SFBRA Measure AA Equity Assessment Focus Group Notes

July 30, 2019

South Vallejo, CA

Is Measure AA relevant to you?

- The majority of the people in this focus group had no idea about Measure AA before today.
- These EJ community members are already fighting bigger issues such as cancer. She wonders how she or her community can engage with the measure at all when they are already invested in other battles.
- A representative of the Contra Costa county and wondered if her communities were even included in Measure AA. When she heard that these Contra Costa county communities were eligible for Measure AA, she voiced concern over industry versus public and how Measure AA could address problems caused by industry.

Barriers to Engagement

- The focus group members were interested in increasing the number of chairs on the Advisory Committee for community representation, but there's the policy barrier that keeps this from becoming a reality.
- Pat voiced concerns regarding the scoring and approval process of grants, saying that because the grants are not being reviewed by an unbiased third party or some other blind process, that there is a predetermined bias against black communities.
 - "Any kind of bias is bad bias."
- Multiple people in the focus group spoke of discouragement because they aren't getting funding and therefore don't see any improvement or changes. They are tired of whiteness coming in and asking for information when there are never any results.
 - "The walk that I walk, you don't walk."
- A participant brought up how African American communities come up with ideas such as environmental issues, but other communities piggy-back upon those and improve them. Even when African American people are included at meetings where they talk about disadvantaged communities, they feel as though they are just disenfranchised ornaments on a tree rather than independent actors.
- Looking at the list of representatives for the regions, a participant noticed that the person that is supposed to be in charge of this region has never been in contact. She suggested creating necessary criteria to ensure that this person is responsible and is in contact with the community for which they are responsible. She wants to ensure that these people are mandated to make

sure that they reach out to the community or its leaders. Citizen oversight is an issue that has to be addressed.

- Another participant brought up the issue of funding and how major agencies such as the Sierra Club which is chock full of resources competing with small community groups for the grants. This seemed highly unfair with big agencies presumably getting the lion's share which funds aren't being allocated to communities that desperately need the money. She suggests that on the basis of the definition of economically disadvantaged communities, that this should rule out county government agencies. Even though the original grant is about the health of the habitat and the water, the members of the focus group felt strongly about making sure that the money went towards community groups that need the money rather than agencies that are already funded by the government.

Outreach and Education/Language

- A participant suggested that advocacy education is necessary as some of the focus group members didn't know how they could help and came to this focus group seeing answers to that question.
 - Hands-on workshops about the basics of advocacy are necessary. The members of these communities have different capacities for help and can't all be expected to sit down with a thick book and understand everything. Any kind of format is welcome whether it be via newsletter, mailing list, Zoom meeting, or in-person.
- Another participant suggested using community leaders who have already created a trusting relationship with the people in the community. Having people on the ground in these communities that sincerely care for its members is important for the efficacy of education. We need to be mindful of people who can only read to a certain level or have limited access to wifi. He wants to make sure that funds are always allocated to outreach because if it's not going to outreach, then is it being effectively used?
- One participant suggested from past experience to have surveys on how outreach impacted the community after an education event. This way you could quantify the efficacy of the event.

Capacity Building

- A participant called for a community advisory board. To her, the Advisory Council means that communities have little to no power. Instead, she urged for a process where communities are heavily involved because communities need to be able to guide and structure the policy. Community based organizations can't spend all their time servicing the grant.
- Another participant continued to be the voice of reason by saying that the committee that approves or denies the grant proposal needs to be community members. He's concerned about all of these people who put all of the effort and time to attend workshops and write the formal

grant, but who never see results. He wants to make sure that the people that are grading the grants have a solid relationship with the communities.

Scoring Criteria

- A participant voiced a need to know what criteria is essential for approvals. She suggested creating a document with a basic template of what's expected of them, examples of what a competitive proposal looks like, and how to utilize the scoring.
- Another participant pointed out a problem he saw with the grant process. He said it was a racist process where black communities are being turned down because the process of picking grants isn't a blind process.
- Another participant suggested that knowing all of the scoring criteria and being able to make a checklist of all the boxes you need in order to fulfill the grant criteria would be extremely helpful. Having the scoring criteria readily available, perhaps in a rubric format to know explicitly what criteria needs to be met would be a great visual tool.
- Many of the focus group members responded with strong positivity to the idea of a visual application. Rather than having a flowery five page document with precise formatting, they would rather have a visual application which would encourage connection and engagement and be equal or even greater than a paper grant application.

SFBRA Representation

- Several members of the focus group seemed interested in positions on the Advisory Committee, especially when it was brought up that there were no African American people already on the board.
- A participant was especially interested in being on the Advisory Committee and creating an expedited process to make sure that Solano County and the black community is represented.
- Another participant stated that inclusion and diversity are two different things. It's easy to achieve diversity with a bunch of ethnic groups working as janitors, but it's hard to achieve inclusion where there are people from different ethnic groups working at all different levels of a job from janitorial positions to CEOs.

Flip Chart Notes

Agency Feedback

- Actual inclusion at decision-making level
- Grant funding support
- Make all parts of process transparent-- how projects chosen, where and what and how it can be changed
- Small community groups shouldn't be competing with government agencies
- Be mindful of what agencies applying for/receiving funding--racial makeup, leadership
- Money from communities should all go to communities
- Hire black leaders to be in agency jobs (higher up) -- BLACK and represent black
 - Well known in communities they're working with

Barriers to Engagement

- Nothing in place to set rules for how guidelines are produced and implemented (and how communities are included)
- State should have to always take community into consideration; this should be ensured when writing guidelines (have state come up with guidelines for all processes)
- Community process should take place BEFORE proposals released; community should drive process from beginning
- People implementing need to put communities first--need to fight for communities; be held accountable to represent; work for communities
- TRUE inclusive processes need to be put into place
- Many folks hadn't heard of/weren't aware of funding application/how it works
- Funds going to salt ponds (ie) aren't benefiting DACs
- Relevant to inland communities?
- ACCESS shoreline blocked off to public access by industry
- Stewarding land/resilience to climate change for tribal communities

Capacity Building

- Advocacy training (rodeo push back for shoreline access)
- Relationship development with scoring communities
- Grant-writing support
- Stewardship and how it can mitigate climate change
- Workshop to go over/support grant writing process: May-June timeline to give people opportunity to ramp up/make sure have support, have draft ready for September-November period
- FOR THOSE MAKING DECISIONS come to communities to learn about issues

- Diversity vs real inclusion--people affected need to have decision making power--not only included at a lower level
- Lack of money for outreach
- Lack of understanding of grant processes--not included in guiding creating structure/processes
- CBOs spending all time engaging with processes on administrative/monitoring--funding often not accessible because time/resource intensive to access
- Racism--systemic in process
 - Blocking of underrepresented groups--need to be on scoring committees--scoring committees frequently white
- Whiteness comes in asking for info, we do work
- Money for community members--pay consultants to gather
- How do communities get needs met when it has already been identified?
- Contact all groups (especially community groups) to make sure that they have been meaningfully included in application--a letter of support
- More points to projects that benefits local communities--not for middle man--for CBOs, community organizations, direct benefit to community organizations

Outreach and Education/Language

- 101 workshops: hands on--utilize as many tools as possible: mailing/newsletters, zoom meetings, in person workshops; BE IN COMMUNITY, find people on the ground, trusted in the community, and can explain in meaningful/accessible language
- Money \$\$\$ outreach is everything
- Understanding grant process-make accessible
- "Agency" language isn't accessible to black organizations
- Special focus on BLACK needed (have focus for tribal)
- Take back feedback--but see nothing changing
- Don't take our notes/ideas and then go to the table and have a discussion about us--bnh vs not just as an ornament
- Lack of capacity building--eg grant writing support
- Major agencies competing with small community groups for same funding
- Lack of outreach led about funding opportunities and relevance to communities
- Lack of F.A.
- Shoreline public access blocked by industry
- Who in position of scoring proposals? Need a community representative
- People getting funding based on race. Not always a good thing

Is Measure AA relevant to you?

- What is Measure AA? Make connection

- How does it affect my community? How do I engage in processes; relate to other pressing issues communities deal with
- Living close to refinery: connecting to health issues; environmental health factors
- Access to shoreline: culture of fishing
- Phillips has blocked access to public resource//natural right
- LACK OF MONEY FOR OUTREACH

SFBRA Representation

- Actual inclusion at decision-making level
- Community-based committee to say what grant process should look like and make sure grant program is feasible for low resourced organizations
- Need to fully understand how grants are scored
- How can we make sure governing board members are listening to their constituents?
- Can change guidelines
- How do we make representation meaningful--if 1 black person and 7 whites are out-voted?

Scoring Criteria

- Make transparent
- Blind scoring by third party; doesn't know about
 - Brings in bias
- Need to talk about racism in process
- Only 1% go to black communities
- Need to have more black people deciding who gets grants/at the table
- Scorers need to be more representative of black community groups to address racism (special focus on black communities)
- Revamp processes/scoring criteria to meet communities; rather than make communities adopt to scoring criteria + developed by white
- Who unites scoring criteria?
- Department of public works should be mandated to partner with and reach out to community groups
- No requirement to show meaningful relationships
- With community--need to demonstrate relation structure, giving money to community-based groups to do outreach
- All funding should go to communities/not government agencies--shouldn't take money from communities/homeowners to pay government agency
- Exclusion of EDAs implicitly from environmental issues--funding for wetland restoration happening in communities but "not for us"
- Make available/release ahead of time
- Bring to community
- Supplemental materials—like sf community
- Triangle application process; what's accepted
- Who are scorers, how chosen, how picking for good proposals; give yes/no

- How do communities get needs met when it has already been identified?
- Contact all groups (especially community groups) to make sure that they have been meaningfully included in application--a letter of support
- More points to projects that benefit local communities--not for middle man--for CBOs, community organization, direct benefit to community organizations