

SAN FRANCISCO BAY RESTORATION AUTHORITY

Staff Recommendation
June 14, 2024

STORYTELLING SHORELINE FUTURES: YOUTH VISIONING AND ACTION

Project No. RA-041
Project Manager: Vanessa Aczon

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$300,000 through the Community Grants Program to Mycelium Youth Network to develop and implement the Storytelling Shoreline Futures: Youth Visioning and Action project, which consists of: 1) empowering and educating approximately 12 youth on shoreline and climate justice issues through the power of storytelling; 2) conducting shoreline habitat restoration and enhancement; and 3) hosting a community event that will engage approximately 150-300 members in shoreline restoration activities, artmaking, and role-playing games at three shoreline locations in Alameda and Santa Clara Counties.

LOCATION: Martin Luther King, Jr. Regional Shoreline, Eden Landing Ecological Preserve, and Palo Alto Baylands Preserve; Alameda and Santa Clara Counties; Measure AA Regions: East and South Bay.

MEASURE AA PROGRAM CATEGORY: Safe, Clean Water and Pollution Prevention Program; Vital Fish, Bird and Wildlife Habitat Program; Shoreline Public Access Program.

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Locations Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [Project Letters](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority adopt the following resolution and findings:

Resolution:

The San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000) to Mycelium Youth Network to develop and implement the Storytelling Shoreline Futures: Youth Visioning and Action project, which consists of: 1) empowering and educating approximately 12 youth on shoreline and climate justice issues through the power of storytelling; 2) conducting shoreline habitat restoration and enhancement; and 3) hosting a community event that will engage approximately 150-300 members in shoreline restoration activities, artmaking, and role-playing games at three shoreline

locations in Alameda and Santa Clara Counties. Prior to commencement of the project, the grantee shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Authority the following:

1. A detailed work program, schedule, and budget.
2. Names and qualifications of any contractors to be employed in carrying out the project.
3. A plan for acknowledgement of Authority funding.
4. Evidence that all permits and approvals required to implement the project have been obtained.
5. Evidence that the grantee has entered into agreements sufficient to enable the grantee to implement, operate, and maintain the project.

Findings:

Based on the accompanying staff recommendation and attached exhibits, the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority hereby finds that:

1. The proposed authorization is consistent with the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority Act, Gov. Code Sections 66700-66706.
2. The proposed authorization is consistent with the San Francisco Bay Clean Water, Pollution Prevention and Habitat Restoration Measure (Measure AA).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends that the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority (Authority) authorize a grant of up to \$300,000, as part of its Community Grants Program, to Mycelium Youth Network (MYN) to develop and implement the Storytelling Shoreline Futures: Youth Visioning and Action project. The proposed project will consist of: 1) empowering and educating approximately 12 youth on shoreline and climate justice issues through the power of storytelling; 2) conducting shoreline habitat restoration and enhancement; and 3) hosting a community event that will engage approximately 150-300 members through shoreline restoration activities, artmaking, and role-playing games that emphasize the preservation and enhancement of the shorelines at Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline (MLK Shoreline) and Eden Landing Ecological Preserve in Alameda County and the Palo Alto Baylands Preserve in Santa Clara County (Exhibit 1).

Oakland's economically disadvantaged communities are at the forefront of the challenges posed by sea level rise, flooding, toxic and hazardous waste, and other issues affecting the Oakland shoreline. The city's youth, particularly those from communities of color, face a shortage of education and preparation in confronting these climate-related challenges.

To address this issue, MYN will partner with Save The Bay, the Exploratorium, game designers, and storytellers to develop and implement a five-month Leadership in Storytelling (LiS) program, focused on community visioning and restoration enhancement work. This program, a paid internship for 12 middle and high school students from surrounding Oakland communities, aims to empower youth by increasing their knowledge of ecological concepts and amplifying

their voices within and beyond their communities through immersive experiences in storytelling, role-playing games, and habitat restoration efforts.

While the LiS program elements will be more fully developed as part of the project, the program will include the following elements:

- Bringing youth interns to at least three Save The Bay restoration sites, where they will collaborate with environmental scientists and historians to explore restoration challenges and solutions. Youth interns will also engage in hands-on restoration work, which may include weeding invasive plants, collecting native seeds, planting native plants, and plant biodiversity monitoring.
- Youth participating in on-site Exploratorium events focused on raising awareness of sea level rise and shoreline restoration work.
- Facilitating workshops and MLK Shoreline walking tours that will engage youth in hands-on restoration work.
- Providing training for youth to create and lead an environmental justice Live Action Role Playing (LARP) game.

Lastly, the project will culminate in a “Day of Action” community engagement and visioning event, aimed at raising awareness and mobilizing community members in environmental conservation efforts. This event will offer diverse workshops, art activities, and hands-on restoration work, fostering meaningful conversation, and collaborative action among the youth interns and participants. Additionally, the event will feature the LARP game, co-created and led by LiS youth interns, providing an immersive platform for addressing environmental challenges and exploring real-world solutions in a dynamic and engaging manner.

Founded in 2017, Mycelium Youth Network has been a pioneer in equipping San Francisco Bay Area youth with resources, training, and knowledge from the ground up that will allow them to survive and thrive in a climate-impacted world. MYN has a demonstrated track record of organizing and facilitating oral story-telling and role-playing games that specifically address environmental justice issues for youth. Additionally, MYN has previously implemented similar projects where community members, led by youth, actively participate in enacting real-world solutions to environmental problems within immersive gameplay. Through their three major programs, Climate Resilient Schools, Youth Leadership Council, and Gaming for Justice, MYN has served over 3,500 Bay Area youth. As one of the few organizations actively empowering youth to tackle climate change in the United States, MYN is uniquely positioned to carry out this project.

The project garners wide-ranging support, evident through partnerships with organizations like Save The Bay, the Exploratorium, and The Brower Dellums Institute for Sustainable Policy Studies and Action (The Brower Dellums Institute) highlight the breadth of support for the project, emphasizing a collective commitment to environmental stewardship and community empowerment through a creative approach. Furthermore, drawing from comments gained from a similar project that involved storytelling and role-playing games, MYN incorporated that feedback from community members to enhance this project.

Site Description: The restoration and enhancement efforts of the project will take place at three locations, all of which are Save The Bay restoration areas: 1) Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline; 2) Eden Landing Ecological Preserve; and 3) Palo Alto Baylands Preserve.

The MLK Shoreline is jointly owned by several public agencies, including the City of Oakland, Port of Oakland, East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD), East Bay Municipal Utility District, Alameda County Flood Control District, and Pacific Gas & Electric Company. EBRPD manages the MLK Shoreline and has various leases and agreements to manage parcels they do not own. Eden Landing Ecological Preserve (Eden Landing) is owned and managed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), and the Palo Alto Baylands Preserve is owned and managed by the City of Palo Alto.

The majority of the restoration activities will occur at the MLK Shoreline, where three potential sites, including the Day of Action site, will be identified through collaboration with Save The Bay and EBRPD. Situated within a heavily urbanized area, the MLK Shoreline has a variety of recreational amenities, including hiking trails, picnic spots, and birdwatching areas, and is comprised of wetland and upland habitats, providing crucial habitat for wildlife. Also, due to the site's location in the Central Bay, trash is a common occurrence, particularly during storm events when urban runoff washes debris onto the shoreline.

The two other restoration sites where light restoration work will be conducted, Eden Landing Ecological Preserve and Palo Alto Baylands Preserve, feature diverse habitats including tidal salt marshes, mudflats, and upland areas, providing critical wildlife habitat. Both locations are vital for migratory birds and support endangered species such as the Ridgway's rail and the salt marsh harvest mouse.

Save The Bay has long-standing partnerships with EBRPD at the MLK Shoreline, CDFW at Eden Landing, and the City of Palo Alto at the Palo Alto Baylands Preserve. Existing restoration work is conducted under special permits and agreements, permitting volunteer programs, staff workdays, nonnative plant removal, and planting native species. The project has identified specific restoration and enhancement areas that will utilize existing Save The Bay's restoration areas within Eden Landing and the Palo Alto Baylands Preserve locations.

PROJECT FINANCING

San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority	\$300,000
Exploratorium	<u>\$35,000</u>
Project Total	\$335,000

MYN has secured additional funding from the Exploratorium, who has committed \$35,000 to support the project.

CONSISTENCY WITH AUTHORITY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION, THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY RESTORATION AUTHORITY ACT:

The proposed project is consistent with Government Code Section 66704.5 of the Authority’s enabling legislation and is, therefore, eligible for grant funding from the Authority. The project is consistent with Section 66704.5(a) because Mycelium Youth Network is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, and the project will occur along the Oakland, Hayward, and Palo Alto shorelines of Alameda and Santa Clara Counties within the Authority’s jurisdiction. The project is consistent with 66704.5(b)(1) & (3) because it will restore and enhance natural habitats, provide the education and leadership skills needed to protect natural habitats, and provide public access through youth-based educational opportunities and a community-based event hosted along the shoreline in the San Francisco Bay area. The project is consistent with Section 66704.5(e)—which allows grants awarded under Section 66704.5(a) to support “all phases of planning, construction, monitoring, operation, and maintenance” of eligible projects under Section 66704.5(b)—because the grant will fund implementation of restoration, enhancement, and public access; it will also support planning for future protection, restoration, and public access, including through development of leadership skills in community visioning and storytelling and various environmental, educational opportunities.

CONSISTENCY WITH MEASURE AA PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES:

The proposed project is consistent with the programs and measures of Measure AA, as outlined below:

The project would support the *Safe, Clean Water and Pollution Prevention Program*’s purpose of removing pollution, trash, and harmful toxins from the Bay by facilitating water health and watershed education, conducting trash cleanups, and engaging in restoration activities to provide clean water for fish, birds, wildlife, and people.

The project would support the *Vital Fish, Bird and Wildlife Habitat Program*’s purpose of significantly improving wildlife habitat by replacing invasive plant species with native plants, facilitating learning opportunities, and cultivating partnerships needed for youth and the broader communities to engage in stewardship, maintenance, and monitoring of habitat restoration projects in and around the Bay.

The project would support the *Shoreline Public Access Program*’s purpose of enhancing the quality of life of Bay Area residents through safer and improved public access by hosting a Day of Action community engagement event that will raise awareness and encourage community members in environmental conservation efforts, including pollution prevention, wildlife habitat, public access, and flood protection, to protect the Bay’s health.

CONSISTENCY WITH MEASURE AA PRIORITIZATION CRITERIA:

1. **Greatest positive impact.** Through a creative and culturally-responsive approach, the proposed project will train and educate Oakland youth in environmental justice issues and hands-on habitat restoration work. The project is expected to bolster youths’ confidence by

deepening their understanding of ecological concepts, instilling a sense of ownership and investment in preserving their shoreline habitats.

2. **Greatest long-term impact.** Frontline communities, especially the youth within them, face a disproportionate vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. To address this inequity, the proposed project will train youth by engaging them on topics that will facilitate a greater sense of civic engagement, and connection between community and the land. Youth will learn from and collaborate with environmental advocates and experts, receiving training on habitat restoration, environmental policy and planning work, demonstrating to the youth the potential careers in the environmental field. Additionally, the project will establish and maintain an interactive website portal on their platform. This portal will facilitate communication and interaction between youth and educators throughout the LiS program. It will also serve as a platform for youth to continue their involvement in shoreline restoration work well beyond the project.
3. **Leveraging resources and partnerships.** As highlighted in the Project Financing section, MYN has secured additional funding to support this project. The project also leverages MYN's relationships with multiple community partners, game designers, and storytellers. MYN will work with Save The Bay and the Exploratorium to develop and execute the project. The Brower Dellums Institute is an additional project partner who may provide a workshop of their environmental efforts to LiS youth interns and on the Day of Action. See project letters for more information about these partnerships (Exhibit 2).
4. **Economically disadvantaged communities.** The proposed project is specifically designed to benefit economically disadvantaged communities in Oakland. The majority of intended participants will identify as Latinx, African-American, and Asian. These individuals primarily reside in neighborhoods that are disproportionately impacted by environmental issues. Through the LiS program, MYN will pay youth interns for their time in the program and will prepare them with the knowledge to participate in future community-centered environmental engagement.
5. **Benefits to economy.** The proposed project will provide financial compensation to the LiS youth interns and garner more support for shoreline restoration efforts. LiS youth interns will also develop storytelling and leadership skills with an environmental lens that will help prepare them to practice civic engagement and potential work in the intersection of art and the environmental fields.
6. **Engage youth and young adults.** The proposed project will engage 12 local middle and high school youth through their LiS program where they will learn about shoreline ecosystems, participate in restoration work, and receive training to create and lead an environmental-focused live action role-playing game. On the Day of Action, a wide range of community members will also have the opportunity to participate in the game, attend shoreline restoration workshops, and engage with information booths to get involved in restoration work and policy.
7. **Monitoring, maintenance, and stewardship.** Project participants will perform only short-term restoration activities under this grant. However, these activities are designed to support, expand, and advance the project partner, Save The Bay's ongoing shoreline restoration

efforts. As part of their existing monitoring protocol, Save The Bay will conduct annual vegetation monitoring for all the project's restoration sites. MYN intends to track the project's restoration work, which will allow them to incorporate it in potential future projects.

8. **Coastal Conservancy's San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.**

The proposed project meets the selection criteria of the Conservancy's San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program. The project engages youth and the broader communities in shoreline restoration efforts, enhancing the resiliency of shoreline communities and the ecosystems to climate change impacts. The project is a valuable regional investment as it will build and foster leadership skills, social well-being, and knowledge for youth in environmental justice and shoreline resiliency work, ensuring sustainability for future generations. Moreover, the project provides multiple benefits, such as equipping youth with the skills to understand and respond to the impacts of climate change, engaging the broader frontline communities in climate resiliency efforts, and integrating shoreline restoration work that supports and advances existing shoreline restoration initiatives. The project is also thoughtfully planned with meaningful engagement as evidence by multiple partnerships.

9. **San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission's Coastal Management Program.** The proposed project is consistent with BCDC's San Francisco Bay Plan, part of its Coastal Management Program. In particular, the proposed project would support the Environmental Justice and Social Equity Policies of the Bay Plan, which state that BCDC recognizes the importance of low-income communities of color as invaluable stakeholders and is committed to uplifting the voices of communities who have been historically excluded from decision-making processes. Meaningfully involving these communities means making sure people can participate in decisions about activities that may affect their environment and health. The project would help equip youth in Oakland communities with the knowledge and skills necessary to become local conservation leaders and empower them to participate in government decisions that affect the Baylands near their community.

CONSISTENCY WITH AUTHORITY'S INTERIM TRIBAL CONSULTATION POLICY:

The proposed project is consistent with the Authority's Interim Tribal Consultation Policy, Resolution 108. MYN has garnered support for the project from a tribal-led non-profit. They will maintain continuous coordination and communication as they work on developing specific workshops and events that may be included in the project. Additionally, on May 7, 2024, the Authority sent letters to consult with nine tribes of Alameda County. Similarly, on May 15, 2024, letters were sent to eight tribes in Santa Clara County. No responses were received.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

The proposed project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 15333. This exemption is applicable as the habitat restoration component of the project does not exceed five acres in size and will be designed to ensure the restoration and enhancement of habitat for fish, plants, and wildlife by removing invasive plants and trash and revegetating disturbed areas with native plant

species through the use of manual labor exclusively. The project is also categorically exempt under Section 15304 as it involves small-scale removal of invasive species and planting of native plants without the removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees. The curriculum development and training components of the project are exempt from CEQA under Section 15323 which exempts the regular operations of existing facilities for public gatherings.

Upon approval of the project, staff will file a Notice of Exemption.