URBAN GREENING PROJECTS
FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES GRANT PROGRAM

PROPOSITION 84

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

IMPORTANT! ROUND 2 INCLUDES A CONCEPT PROPOSAL PROCESS

Last Updated: 1/31/11

Funding Specifics

Q: How many funding rounds remain?

A: This is the second of three funding rounds.

Q: How much is available in this round?

A: Up to $20 million in Fiscal Year 2011/12 (up to *25%, or $5M of said $20M is available for planning grants)*

Q: What are the minimum and maximum amounts that will be awarded per individual grant?

A: None. No minimum or maximum amounts have been established for this round.

Q: By when must the funds be expended?

A: Because the appropriation of the funds is currently pending, there is no specific timeline. However, the timeline for local assistance bond funds is typically three years to encumber (via the execution of a grant agreement) and an additional two years to fully expend.

Q: Are matching funds required?

A: No. Matching funds are not required for this program. The guidelines, however, are structured to encourage leveraging all resources, which would include other sources of funds.

Q: At the time of application, does the project need to be completely funded other than the funds requested through the grant process?

A: No. However, if other funding sources have not been secured at the time of the application, a contingency plan should be provided describing how the applicant will proceed with the project if all necessary funds to complete the project cannot be secured during the grant process.

Eligible Applicants

Q: What types of organizations are eligible for these grant funds?

A: Eligible applicants are defined in statute as city, county, non-profit organization, and **NEW TO THIS FUNDING ROUND**, special districts (see definition in guidelines) and JPAs formed pursuant to pursuant to Chapter 5 (commencing with Section 6500) of Division 7 of the Government code, if at least one of the parties to the joint powers agreement qualifies as an eligible applicant as described on page 5 of these guidelines.

Q: Are Federal Agencies eligible to apply for a grant?

A: No. Federal Agencies are not eligible applicants.

Q: Is there a way for organizations that are not deemed "eligible" to participate in this grant opportunity?

A: Entities not eligible for funding are encouraged to partner with cities, counties, and non-profit organizations, special districts and JPAs (see above). Collaboration, including partnerships, is highlighted in the guidelines as a priority.

Eligible Projects

Q: Will there be an opportunity for our project concept to be reviewed for eligibility prior to completing the application?

A: Yes. **NEW THIS FUNDING ROUND,** applicants are **REQUIRED** to mail or submit electronically a written concept proposal form for review regarding eligibility and possible weaknesses for their proposed project.

Q: What are projects that use "natural systems"?

A: Projects that use natural systems are projects that utilize current or historical climatic, geologic and hydrologic conditions to preserve, re-establish and/or improve natural processes. Project examples include preservation of land for habitat and/or open space, flood plain restoration, daylighting streams, and restoration with native plants.

Q: Are projects eligible that add or modify bike lanes on existing roads?

A: As a stand-alone project, no. Modifying bike lanes do not use or mimic a natural system, nor does this type of project expand and/or enhance green spaces. If converting a bike lane to a permeable surface as part of a larger greening effort, such a project may be considered eligible.

Q: After reading the definition of an urban area, I'm still confused regarding what qualifies. Can you elaborate?

A: To meet the threshold of approximately 10 dwelling units per acre, you need to demonstrate that your project is located in (or adjacent to) an area with existing **or planned-for** density of at least 3,500 dwelling units within an area equivalent to 500 acres. When determining your equivalent area, you can exclude open space, agricultural land, commercial, retail, etc. While the border must be contiguous, it need not be symmetrical. The project must provide direct benefits (e.g., within a 30 minute walk) and/or related environmental benefits (e.g., carbon sequestration, stormwater capture) to the urban area used to qualify for the program.

Q: Is a project that creates a "green building" (i.e., energy and water efficient buildings with reduced waste and toxic materials) or retrofits existing buildings into "green" buildings eligible for grant funding?

A: No. Please refer to the definition of "urban greening" in the guidelines, page 49.

Q: Do projects that are developed to satisfy a stormwater MS4 permit qualify for this grant?

A: No. Those types of projects are developed to meet pre-existing requirements of a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System General Permit (NPDES). Projects would have to go beyond compliance and meet all other statutory requirements to be eligible.

Q: Are acquisitions of property eligible?

A: Yes. Acquisitions proposed must meet all statutory requirements, must be from a willing seller and must be acquired for no more than fair market value (defined in Appendix Q, beginning on page 40 of the guidelines).

Eligible Costs

Q: Are costs directly related to the urban greening project, but incurred prior to the project award date or after the end of the project performance period, eligible for reimbursement?

A: No. Costs must be incurred during the project performance period to be eligible. The project performance period is defined in the grant agreement.

Q: If awarded a grant, will the applicant be able to use an overhead rate for personnel and/or employee services?

A: No. All eligible costs must be tracked and correlated directly to implementation of the project by specific project codes, employee timesheets, invoices, etc.

Q: Will costs associated with dying trees, such as removal, trimming, disease treatments and/or inter-planting be eligible?

A: Yes. As part of a larger project that meets all statutory requirements, removal and/or control of dead, dying or diseased trees are eligible costs.

Q: Because the majority of wheeled, non-motorized travel occurs on shared roadway with automobiles, is signing or striping roads an eligible cost?

A: No. Grant funds cannot be used to facilitate motorized use. However, costs of a trail that would occasionally need to accommodate maintenance and/or emergency vehicles **may** be eligible as part of a project that meets all statutory criteria.

Project Specifics

Q: Is it the applicant who must have site control/land tenure?

A: Yes. However, there are various ways to meet the site control/land tenure requirement, (e.g., fee ownership, long-term agreements and easements). Site control must include the right to develop, operate and maintain all lands included in the project for the period required in the guidelines. See page 30 of the guidelines.

Q: Does CEQA need to be completed prior to submitting a grant application?

A: No. CEQA does not need to be completed at the time of the application. In general, grantees have one year to complete this process.

However, at a minimum, the applicant is required to submit a copy of the Initial Study or Environmental Checklist covering the project with the application. If the project is exempt, the applicant can submit a draft copy of the Notice of Exemption. The Notice of Exemption or Notice of Determination will need to be filed with the county clerk's office and State Clearing House as appropriate, if awarded funding. Additionally, the applicant is asked to explain how and when they anticipate CEQA being completed. See page 17 of the guidelines for complete requirements.

For all projects funded under this program, CEQA compliance includes an analysis of greenhouse gas emissions.

Q: Are permits required to be completed prior to submitting an application?

A: No. Permits are not required to be in place when submitting an application. The guidelines do, however, require that the applicant include a status of all necessary permits. This status may be considered when evaluating project readiness.

Q: The grant guidelines require prevailing wages be paid for any public work projects financed with Prop 84 grant funds. How is this requirement applicable to a city (the grantee) that plans on using their Public Works Department to complete the project?

A: Labor Code Section 1771 specifically exempts the prevailing wage requirement for work carried out by a public agency with its own forces.

Q: The Guidelines define Plant Palette, but how do I know if my plant palette is appropriate?

A: To determine appropriate plants, we offer the following as a guide:

Include plants that –

- Are locally indigenous and well-adapted to the conditions that will prevail on the site when in use
- Have a number of local providers who can offer advice on establishment and maintenance
- Offer structure, shelter and food supplies that can support local native wildlife species that are compatible with the proposed uses of the site
- Can be maintained in healthy condition with modest upkeep and maintenance
- Remain in a reasonable size range for the location and anticipated use
- Contribute to amelioration of urban environmental problems (e.g., plants that offer shade, cool by evapotranspiration, bioremediate urban stormwater runoff, intercept and immobilize air pollutants, produce usable mulch, and sequester carbon)
- Are competitively priced and available as economically-sized container plants so that replacement is affordable
- Will be appropriate, as they mature, to the expected use and available rooting volume

Application Process

Q: When are concept proposals due?

A: Concept proposals (**NEW this Round**) will be accepted from **April 1 through April 30, 2011**. The concept proposal form is now available in hard copy and will be available electronically March 31, 2011.

Q: When are full grant applications due?

A: Invitations to submit full applications are anticipated to be issued in the summer of 2011, with applications due late summer or early fall of 2011. Invitations will be sent to those who 1) submit a concept proposal on or before April 30, 2011, 2) meet minimum eligibility requirements, and 3) demonstrate the proposed project could be competitive for urban greening funds. An invitation to apply does not guarantee the project would compete successfully for a grant.

Q: When will the grant awards announced?

A: It is anticipated that grant awards for this program will be announced in early 2012.

Q: My organization has several eligible projects that we feel are competitive. Should we submit one concept proposal for all projects, or an individual concept proposal for each?

A: Submit one concept proposal for each individual project. Each proposed project (as defined on page 5 of the guidelines) will be evaluated by staff on an individual basis. If the organization is considering multiple urban greening projects, it is recommended that it submit concept proposals for only those projects they feel would be competitive and that could be completed within the anticipated appropriation period, which is anticipated to end May 2016.

Q: Will an applicant be penalized for submitting more than one concept proposal or one application?

A: No. Staff will evaluate each concept proposal on its own merit. If an invitation to submit a full application is issued, the committee will evaluate and score each proposed project application on its own merit.

Q: How do I know if I have multiple projects or one project?

A: If the "project" is covered by more than one CEQA review, it is not one project. The entire proposed project to be funded must be included under one CEQA review (subsequent actions aside), with all environmental impacts analyzed for the entire project. If not, then it is more than one project. Each proposed project must meet the program goals.

Q: Can an applicant apply for a grant to create an urban greening plan and also apply for a separate grant to implement an urban greening project?

A: Yes. Applicants are encouraged to submit proposals for either or both programs, as long as the proposals meet the stated requirements.

Each application will be scored independently and must have no interdependence on the other application, either stated or implied. Each application should also note the future of the proposed action (plan or project) if either application is not funded. For an Urban Greening **project**, the budget should detail that no more than 25% of the total grant will be spent on non-construction costs such as project design/planning, administration, or CEQA compliance.

Grant Selection Process

Q: Will an application go forward for review without a letter from the Willing Seller?

A: No. Applications must include a willing seller letter stating that if grant funds are awarded, the seller is willing to enter into an agreement for the sale of the real property for a purchase price not to exceed fair market value.

Q: How will you determine whether or not you are going to schedule a site visit?

A: The number of projects receiving site visits will depend upon the ranking, number of applications received, requested funding amounts, etc.

Q: Can I use density goals stated in a Regional Blueprint to meet required minimum density in the grant program?

A: Yes, if the regional blueprint has been endorsed by the local entity with authority to implement.

Q: Does the density need to currently exist to qualify?

A: No. If the city or county with the corresponding land-use authority has made significant progress to adopt plans or ordinances to increase density, the "planned for" density can be used to qualify. How far along such plans or ordinances are may be a competitive factor in determining funding recommendations.