# California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force Grants and Resources Virtual Subcommittee Meeting Summary: April 7, 2025

## Meeting Called to Order

Facilitator Wylie started the meeting at 2:02 p.m.

## Welcome and Housekeeping

Facilitator Wylie provided housekeeping information for all meeting participants. Slides and materials presented during the meeting are available on the Strategic Growth Council (SGC) website.

## Roll Call

Roll call was conduct by the facilitator. Members present:
- Thea Rittenhouse
- Doria Robinson
- James Nakahara
- Liya Schwartzman (joined at 2:08 p.m.)

Members absent:
- None

Quorum was established.

## Action: Approval of Past Meeting Summaries

Approval of the January 9, 2025 meeting summary.

- Motion to approve made by member Robinson.
- Motion seconded by member Nakahara.
- Motion passed (3-0-1*), *member Schwartzman absent for vote.

## Grant Programs Research Updates and Discussion

Staff provided an overview of grant program research findings. Highlights included:

Program Selection:
- 12 programs were initially selected based on certain criteria: government-administered, California-available, directly funding land access (measured by acres transitioned).

Research Methodology:

- Staff conducted initial desk research on grant programs followed by direct outreach to program leads requesting the past five years of grant funding data. Eight programs responded to this request.

Overview:
- Most programs focus on land conservation and acquisition.
- There is limited demographic data and variability in reporting years and detail.
- This snapshot covered 456 awarded projects over 23 funding cycles.
- 392 awards went to nonprofits and public agencies; approximately 57 to Tribal Nations; a small number to for-profit entities.
- Seven programs support easement acquisition; five support fee title acquisition; five support planning and capacity building; one supports urban farming activities.
- 331 projects associated with 559,594 acres impacted.
- $924 million awarded in state funds.

Eligibility:
- All programs include California Native American Tribes and nonprofits as eligible applicants.
- Six programs include government agencies; one program includes for-profit businesses.

Program Demand:
- Subscription rates (applicants vs. awardees) ranged from 13% to over 100%.
- Some programs offer pre-application processes for applicants which reduced total applicant numbers reported in the data.

Prioritizing Equity:
- Two programs are designed explicitly around equity goals.
- Other programs had varying approaches to set-asides and equity measures.
- Definitions of priority communities varied across programs.

Funding Predictability:
- Three programs showed consistent annual funding; others had gaps or were newly established and had only completed one cycle of funding.

Scale and Land Tenure:
- No explicit preference for large-scale projects.
- The average size of projects across programs ranged between 211–2,388 acres.
- Few programs addressed long-term land tenure arrangements.
- One program prioritized applicants with less than 20 acres of land.

Additional Highlights:
- Some programs offer pre-application processes, including technical assistance and feedback on project ideas before investing time in full application.
- Some programs offer rolling funding and streamlined application processes.
- One program aligned the program evaluation criteria and awards with goals and objectives for tribal and working lands projects clearly outlined in their five-year strategic plan.

Members discussed the findings. One member emphasized the need to explore cultural and community interest easements. Another recommended focusing on successful model programs for potential replication and/or expansion, standardizing reporting metrics, and strengthening land tenure provisions. A third member highlighted the challenges of funding for-profit entities and proposed mechanisms to better support applicants throughout the grant lifecycle.

Members also noted the lack of standardized reporting data on program reach and effectiveness and called for a clear overarching goal or state directive to guide agricultural land access and equity efforts, similar to other state initiatives. Members also requested further research into grant programs that make awards to for-profit farming businesses to learn more about the challenges and limitations.

## Public Comment:

None.

# Working Session

Members discussed what, if any, topics from this discussion should be considered for incorporation into the draft Report and identified topics that are important to discuss either at the working group level or at the May full Task Force meeting. Highlights were:

- There is interest in creating a recommendation for a clear directive around agricultural land equity to guide state programs and funding.
- There is a need to deepen understanding of programs that fund for-profit applicants and their effectiveness.
- The subcommittee would like to explore grant programs that contribute to farmers' stability on their land.
- Include a recommendation to create a centralized, evergreen resource hub listing state grants and resources.
- Consider aligning Task Force recommendations with findings from research, especially around uniform metrics and program equity goals.
- There is potential for additional recommendations related to grant outcomes, land tenure, financing, and response to legislation such as Assembly Bill (AB) 524.
- The *Tax Law and Incentives* working group has a meeting with a CPA scheduled.

Facilitator Wylie summarized action items and next steps, including scheduling the next subcommittee meeting in June, and highlighted upcoming meetings.

## Public Comment:

None.

## General Public Comment:

None.

The meeting adjourned at 3:58 p.m.