

Community Assistance for Climate Equity Program

Regional Climate Collaboratives Program Round 2 Guidelines



CALIFORNIA
STRATEGIC
GROWTH
COUNCIL

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I. About the RCC Program

A. Navigating the RCC Program Process and Guidelines

These Guidelines are a step-by-step guide for learning more about, applying for, and participating in the Strategic Growth Council's (SGC) Regional Climate Collaborative Program (RCC). They reflect legislative requirements on how to use and manage RCC funds. The Guidelines also incorporate lessons learned from Round 1, feedback gathered through an applicant survey, applicant debrief conversations, and a 30-day public comment period in spring 2023.

B. Background

About RCC

[Senate Bill 1072](#) (Leyva, Chapter 377, Statutes of 2018) establishes the RCC Program. SGC received \$10 million to administer Round 2 through [Budget Act of 2021](#). As a capacity-building grant program, RCC enables cross-sectoral partners to deepen relationships and strengthen local coordination, leadership, knowledge, skills, and access to critical resources to drive and sustain climate action. The program aims to support both emerging and established collaboratives. RCC funding is divided into two funding tracks: small grants and large grants. Small grants will range from \$500,000 to \$999,999 and large grants will range from \$1,000,000 to \$1,750,000. SGC is committed to funding at least two Collaboratives from each funding track.

Vision for Racial Equity

SGC is committed to achieving racial equity in its operations, investments, and policy initiatives and to achieving its vision that: All people in California live in healthy, thriving, and resilient communities regardless of race.¹

C. Summary

- **Eligible Applicants:** California Native American Tribes, community-based organizations and non-profits, local government agencies, small businesses, and other organizations with a history of providing community-based outreach and technical assistance
- **Eligible Activities:** Partnership development; project and plan development and implementation; establishment of technical assistance programs or hubs to pursue climate-related funding; data collection; training and education
- **Funding Available for Round 2 Awards:** \$8.5M
 - Small grants between \$500,000 and \$999,999
 - Large grants between \$1M and \$1.75M
- **Project Lengths:** 36-month period

¹ See SGC's [Racial Equity Action Plan](#) for more information on SGC's commitment to racial equity.

- **Grant Availability Type:** Competitive
- **Match Funding Required:** No
- **Disbursement Type:**
 - Advanced pay (up to 25% of the total grant amount)
 - Reimbursement
- **Technical Assistance:**
 - Application support for applicants
 - Implementation support for Grantees

D. Program Contact

Community Assistance for Climate Equity - Regional Climate Collaboratives Program
 Program email: CACE@sgc.ca.gov.

E. Funding Availability

Funding is available on a competitive basis. Of the \$10M allotted to SGC, \$8.5 million is available for grant awards. The remainder of the funding supports implementation of the program through staff support and third-party technical assistance (TA). The expected grant agreement start date is Spring 2024.

Award Amount by Funding Track

Applicants can request the amount of funding needed to carry out the work described in their proposal for the three-year grant term. Minimum and maximum award amounts will be determined based on the funding track. RCC staff may adjust the minimum and maximum award amounts based on demand or unique circumstances. Minimum and maximum award ranges are as follows:

| Funding Track | Minimum Award Amount | Maximum Award Amount |
|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Small Grants</i> | \$500,000 | \$999,999 |
| <i>Large Grants</i> | \$1,000,000 | \$1,750,000 |

F. Program Objectives

RCC invests in projects that advance the following key Program Objectives:

1. **Develop Actionable Plans and Projects:** Collaborative activities should lead to the update and/or development of local plans as well as climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resilience projects that can be implemented if funding is secured. Grant activities will build the ability for Collaborative members and other entities within the communities served to develop competitive grant proposals.

- 2. Build Social Infrastructure:** Collaborative activities must foster trusting and enduring relationships between Collaborative members and with external entities and residents across the Project Area. Building social infrastructure will enable better regional coordination on the development and implementation of climate-related plans, projects, and applications for funding.
- 3. Center Community Engagement and Decision Making:** Collaboratives must directly engage residents and key local entities, with a focus on under-represented and historically excluded groups, in all phases of the RCC project. Collaboratives should use proven engagement methods that facilitate direct participation of community members, such as translating meetings and materials, scheduling meetings at times and locations convenient for community members, and involving community members in project scoping, development, and implementation.
- 4. Develop Equity-Centered Processes:** Collaborative activities should develop or improve local and regional processes that result in demonstrable benefits for under-resourced communities and enable residents, community-based organizations, and tribes to meaningfully co-lead on climate change related priorities.

G. Timeline

The table below provides the Round 2 timeline. While changes are not anticipated, the timeline is subject to changes, and the most up-to-date timeline is available on the [RCC resources page](#).

| Milestones | Dates |
|--|----------------------------|
| Adoption of Final Round 2 Guidelines by SGC | June 29, 2023 |
| Notice of Funding Availability & Application Release | July 6, 2023 |
| Application Overview Webinar | July 13 |
| Application Workshop for Tribal Communities | July 18 |
| Application Workshop for Rural Communities | July 20 |
| Application Workshop for All Audiences | July 25 |
| Application Workshop for Tribal Communities #2 | July 26 |
| Pre-Proposals Due | September 6, 2023, 5pm |
| Full Proposals Due | December 6, 2023, 5pm |
| Interagency Proposal Review & Scoring Period | December 2023-January 2024 |
| Finalist Interviews | Mid-Late January 2024 |
| Award Decisions Announced & Approved by SGC | February 2024 |

II: Before Applying

The steps and sections below are meant to help applicants prepare their application. Before beginning the application process, SGC recommends that prospective applicants:

1. Determine whether they and their project are eligible by reviewing the *Eligibility Requirements*.
2. Review the *Application Components and Scoring Criteria* to determine what information and resources you need to gather to apply.
3. Review *Awarded Applications* to understand what participating in RCC may involve.
4. Access application technical assistance by participating in office hours, an application workshops, or connecting with RCC program staff for help.

A. Eligibility Requirements

Eligible Applicants

Collaboratives may be comprised of the following organizations and entities:

California Native American Tribes: Native American tribes on the California tribal consultation contact list that the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) maintains per Chapter 905 of the Statutes of 2004 (Pub. Resources Code, § 21073).

Please note that the RCC program does **not** require a waiver of sovereign immunity for tribal awardees.

Community-based Organizations and Nonprofits: 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations, non-governmental organizations, philanthropic organizations/foundations, tribal-serving organizations. Organizations, collaboratives, and networks that are fiscally sponsored by any of these types of organizations, and those fiscally sponsored by academic institutions, are also eligible.

Local Government Agencies: cities; counties; metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs); joint powers authorities (JPAs); regional transportation planning agencies (RTPAs); Councils of governments (COGs); California institutions of higher education; special districts (e.g., school districts); public authorities; public agencies; political subdivisions; and public corporations (California GC § 811.2, excluding state agencies).

Small Businesses: Small businesses that can demonstrate certification or eligibility for certification with the California Department of General Services (DGS). Please visit DGS' [Office of Small Business and Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise Services website](#) for these requirements.

Other organizations with a history of providing community-based outreach or technical assistance: Applicants are responsible for determining which organizations play this role in their community and providing justification to demonstrate this in their application. These organizations may vary according to local and regional context.

Collaboratives must have a minimum of four partners. **All eligible applicants can serve as the Managing Partner or a Partner** (see more in the following section below).

B. Collaborative Partnership Structure

Together eligible applicants will establish a Collaborative Partnership Structure (CPS), which is how Collaboratives will organize and operationalize their shared governance model. The CPS is a foundational aspect of the program as RCC seeks to invest in diverse, cross-sector partnerships that facilitate consensus-oriented decision making and collective power sharing. The organizations that make up the Collaborative should work on a broad range of community priorities that span climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience. Each organization should bring different skills and knowledge to the CPS that allow the Collaborative to advance holistic, multi-benefit climate projects.

Managing Partner

The Managing Partner is the organization within the CPS that is responsible for administering the RCC Grant if awarded. To fulfill this role, the Managing Partner needs to have demonstrable administrative and financial capacity to execute the grant agreement. This includes facilitating payment between the State and partners (both advanced and reimbursed payments), coordinating the completion and submittal of grant deliverables, and participating in regular check-ins with SGC. The Managing Partner may serve the Collaborative in other capacities (such as convener, facilitator, network weaver, subject matter expert, etc.) in addition to their administrative duties.

If an organization with a fiscal sponsor is interested in applying as the Managing Partner, they will need to provide a clear description in the application of their ability to effectively administer the grant and the role of their fiscal sponsor in doing so.

Partners

Partners are funded members of the CPS not serving in the Managing Partner role. Partners are responsible for implementing specific capacity building activities stipulated within the Collaborative's application narrative and workplan. Partners should bring different expertise and skills to deliver on their components of the Collaborative's shared work. Partners should also have established trust with the communities they would serve through RCC.

Partnership Agreement

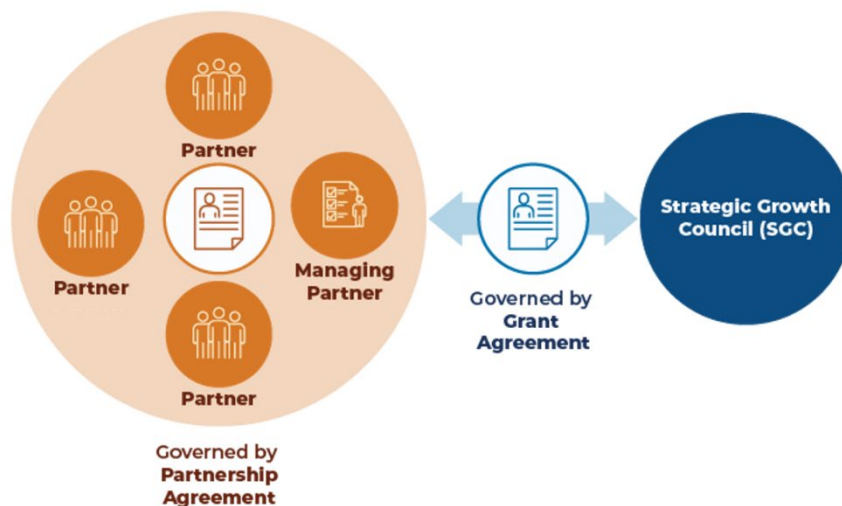
Applicants will be required to develop a Partnership Agreement as part of their RCC application. Because the CPS will govern implementation of the RCC grant, the purpose of the Partnership Agreement is to describe the governance, organization, and financial relationships of the partnership. Partnership Agreements must respond to the following requirements:

- Identification of the Managing Partner
- Description of the roles and responsibilities of the Managing Partner and Partners
- Governance of the Collaborative Partnership Structure, including:

- Transparent decision-making processes
- Transparent process for involving community representatives and other community-based organizations that are not included within the Grant Agreement in decision-making
- The approach to handling disputes and procedures
- Procedures to change, add, or remove members
- Legal and financial considerations, including:
 - Financial relationships between the Managing Partner and Partners
 - The process used to advance and reimburse grant funds to Partners
 - Liability provisions
- Non-discrimination clause

A template for the Partnership Agreement will be included in the application materials as an optional resource. Applicants can submit the Partnership Agreement as an unsigned draft. Awarded applicants will need to provide a signed Partnership Agreement before the Grant Agreement can be signed. SGC may request changes to the terms of the Partnership Agreement during the Post-Award Consultation process.

Visual 1. Collaborative Partnership Structure



Supporters

Applicants may choose to engage organizations as “Supporters” in their grant activities that are not funded partners within the CPS. Supporters are entities that the Collaborative will work with to leverage community engagement, policy making, and technical assistance opportunities. Unlike Partners, Supporters are not funded by the RCC grant and instead offer in-kind time and resources to help advance the work of the Collaborative. Applicants can include Supporters within their CPS and Partnership Agreement if they would like, but it is not mandatory to do so. Including Supporters in an RCC application is optional and is meant to help

applicants leverage existing relationships and efforts. Supporters may provide Letters of Support to include with the RCC application as desired.

C. Eligible Activities

Applicants should propose activities that advance a broad range of climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience priorities through capacity building and technical assistance. There are a total of six eligible activity types. Applicant workplans must address all the mandatory activities listed under activity types 1, 2, 3, and 4. Applicants are welcome to also include optional activities listed under activity types 5 and 6.

Mandatory Activities

The RCC program includes a set of required activities, categorized into four key types. The required activities are intentionally broad, and applicants are responsible for describing what these entail for their proposed project. The application workbook will help applicants develop and organize tasks and subtasks that include the mandatory activities.

1. Relationship Building, Priority Identification, Plan and Project Development:

- 1.a.* Coordinate members of Collaboratives to build relationships across organizations and define shared values, vision, and principles of how to work together in support of RCC Program Objectives
- 1.b.* Support the development of partnerships between local entities and public, private, and philanthropic funding sources
- 1.c.* Conduct community engagement within under-resourced communities
- 1.d.* Convene discussions on community needs regarding potential climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resilience projects eligible for statewide or other grant programs with specific allocations for under-resourced communities
- 1.e.* Develop and align community and project plans that benefit under-resourced communities, including climate action plans, that demonstrate local needs and identify multiple-benefit projects for implementation
- 1.f.* Assist in the development of local job training and anti-displacement policies and programs

2. Serve as a Local Technical Assistance Provider/Hub

- 2.a.* Conduct outreach and build awareness of competitive grant programs
- 2.b.* Provide policy, program, and technical assistance expertise to develop and align multi-benefit projects with potential funding supports
- 2.c.* Offer assistance and training for grant application development, project management, implementation, and monitoring
- 2.d.* Serve as an intermediary between local entities and technical experts from State agencies and other organizations

3. RCC Project Evaluation

- 3.a. Develop a project evaluation plan (with the support of third-party TA provider)
- 3.b. Conduct data collection, tracking, and reporting associated with grant deliverables

4. Engage in Peer Learning

4.a. Each Collaborative will identify members to form a peer learning team to participate in SGC-facilitated peer learning for RCC Grantees. This may include both attending trainings led by SGC and technical assistance providers as well as contributing to peer-learning sessions. Collaboratives will be surveyed on training needs and convened quarterly for virtual trainings and knowledge exchanges.

Activity Waiver Request Form

If an applicant believes that **one** mandatory activity from activity types 1 and 2 is unnecessary or otherwise inappropriate for their RCC project, they can request to omit the activity from their application by completing an Activity Waiver Request Form. The Activity Waiver Request Form will be released as an online form on July 6 with the NOFA and must be completed during the Pre-Proposal phase. SGC will approve waiver requests that provide a thorough and convincing justification describing the reasons for their request and how the proposed scope would still advance RCC Program Objectives. Please visit *Appendix B - Activity Waiver Process and Criteria* for more information.

Optional Activities

The following list includes two categories of optional activities that Collaboratives may incorporate into their workplan. Applicants will be required to describe what these optional activities entail within their application.

5. Data Collection and Analysis

5.a. Conduct data collection and analysis that helps identify existing conditions, community priorities, and the impact of planned projects.

6. Education and Training

6.a. Provide education and training for entities within and external to the Collaborative within the Communities of Focus that build the Region's capacity to compete for grants and implement projects in the future. This includes:

- Educational curriculum-based courses on relevant topics and issue areas
- Trainings on specific tools, programs, and policy topics
- Peer learning and trainings between Collaboratives and other related regional collaboration efforts
- Peer learning and trainings across members of an individual Collaborative

D. Project Deliverables

Project activities must result in the creation of clear deliverables. Deliverables should serve as lasting resources to support ongoing capacity building in the Project Area. Required deliverables are outlined below.

Regular Invoice Reports

Collaboratives must submit regular invoice reports on an interval set by SGC and the Grantee in the Grant Agreement. SGC will provide a reporting template for Grantees to use. For more information on these requirements, see *V. Awarded Applicants - A. Grant Agreements and Administration*.

RCC Action Plan

To orient the efforts of Collaboratives, Partners will use the beginning of the grant term to develop an Action Plan that specifies key activities, further defines roles and responsibilities, and establishes timelines. Action Plans should be informed by an analysis of intended outcomes, capacity building needs, and ways to maximize the impact of grant activities. Grantees must complete their Action Plan within the first year of the grant term but may amend the scope in consultation with SGC if necessary. Action Plans should include:

- Roles and responsibilities for different members of the Collaborative in achieving elements of the overall workplan
- Established and refined decision-making processes (building upon Partnership Agreement)
- Additional detail on activities conducted as part of the grant term (building upon the workplan)
- Evaluation Plan created in concert with SGC and technical assistance providers
- Analysis that identifies the necessary additional inputs, such as data or other resources, to successfully implement and maximize the impact of grant activities. This may include:
 - An analysis used to identify the strengths, barriers, assets, relationships, and resources available to the Collaborative to accomplish the project workplan
 - A review and/or analysis of existing plans, community engagement efforts, and needs assessments to help focus areas for additional engagement
 - An assessment of local policies to identify opportunities to facilitate implementation of community priorities.

The RCC Action Plan must be developed by the Collaborative with community participation and using decision-making processes. It should build on the activities and roles submitted as part of the workplan and Partnership Agreement. The Action Plan will serve as a tool to guide project implementation and to hold Partners accountable to one another and to the community regarding project activities and outcomes.

Capacity Building Toolbox

Each Grantee must develop a Capacity Building Toolbox that compiles capacity building outputs created over the course of the RCC grant. The goal of the Capacity Building Toolbox is to serve as a public resource to entities in the region to access capacity building resources on an ongoing basis, support efforts to pursue grant funding, and inform ongoing capacity building work after completion of the RCC project. It will be due at the end of the grant term. The following list includes examples of items that may be included within the Capacity Building Toolbox.

- A compilation of climate data to understand key climate change risks and vulnerabilities facing the region, including anticipated disproportionate impacts for under-resourced populations
- A directory of organizations within the region that may be able to support or partner on grant applications
- A directory of State, Federal, and other grant programs that address community needs
- Information about priority State, Federal, and other grant programs that could fund Collaboratives' priority projects, including timelines, requirements and other considerations for developing applications
- Data collected and/or analyzed that provides information on existing conditions, community needs, and any other relevant information for the purpose of developing projects
- A description of community priorities identified during the grant term
- Education and training materials developed through the grant
- Documentation of best practices and lessons learned for Collaborative, including information about community-led processes used to develop climate-related plans and projects

Community Climate Solutions Inventory

Collaboratives must work with SGC to develop an inventory of the priority plans and projects that the Collaboratives developed or updated during the grant term and intend to seek funding to implement. Applicants can think of this as a compilation of projects that are funding ready. Collaboratives can use the Community Climate Solutions Inventory to communicate their priorities locally and regionally and to various funders. Collaboratives will have creative freedom to design this how they see fit. Examples include spreadsheets, infographics, interactive dashboards, etc.

Annual Reporting

Collaboratives must submit an Annual Report that will be posted publicly on SGC's website and include the following information:

- The members of the Collaborative
- Populations served
- An outline of all the activities conducted as part of the project workplan
- Project and grant development, application, and completion

- Meetings and actions taken by the Collaborative
- An accounting of the administration and expenditures made by the Collaborative
- The outcome of each activity, including, but not limited to, all of the following:
 - Technical assistance provided
 - Success of grants applied for
 - Projects commenced and completed
- The efficacy of capacity building within the region based on outcome indicators included within the Collaborative's Evaluation Plan.

Confidentiality of Tribal Data

Tribal data and Traditional Ecological Knowledge may be excluded from all project deliverables to ensure confidentiality. SGC will work with the Grantee to ensure a clear process for excluding confidential Tribal data in the Grant Agreement.

E. Eligible and Ineligible Costs

The information below outlines eligible and ineligible costs for using RCC funds. Applicants must ensure that the costs proposed in the project budget are eligible for funding. If an application recommended for award includes ineligible costs, they will be removed, and the project's recommended total award will be adjusted accordingly.

Staff Costs

Grantees and subgrantees staff costs, including salary at an hourly rate, benefits, taxes, and leave. Staff may be full-time or part-time employees.

If applicants wish to use grant funds to pay for interns, fellows, or other positions that are not on an organization's payroll, these costs should be classified in the budget as a direct cost via a consultant contract (more below).

Consultants

Collaboratives may dedicate up to 10% of their direct costs budget to consultants who have not yet been identified. The purpose of this budget set-aside is to enable Collaboratives to access specific technical expertise to assist with components of the Collaborative's workplan as needed and/or add staff capacity through employing interns and fellows.

Collaboratives may also opt to include consultants as a formal partner within their CPS. If that is the case, applicants must describe how the consultant firm meets the applicant eligibility criteria. Consultants who are formal Partners may have budgets that exceed the 10% cap.

Travel Costs

Travel reimbursements must adhere to the State rates and conditions established on the [CalHR website](#). Please note two exceptions: incidentals and out-of-state travel are **not** reimbursable under this grant.

Tools, Subscriptions, and Software

Subscriptions to tools and other software that will help increase capacity, facilitate communication, or otherwise facilitate implementation of the project such as project management software, video conferencing technology subscriptions, and mapping software.

Engagement, Outreach, Education, and Training

Costs related to the development and administration of engagement, outreach, education, and training activities under the grant, including, but not limited to:

- Materials developed for outreach events, trainings, and other grant activities
- Access to proprietary data or research materials
- Facilitation for meetings
- Translation and interpretation for meetings and written materials
- Marketing and advertisements
- Participant compensation that is an exchange of payment for services rendered in the development of community work products, and appropriately documented with deliverables such as sign in sheets or written surveys. Note that leaflets, advertisements, and marketing materials about the events should not advertise compensation to induce participation.
- Transportation stipends and provision of transportation services for community residents, such as a vanpool
- Rental costs of equipment, facilities, or venues
- Provision of childcare services for community residents at Collaborative sponsored events
- Food and refreshments that are determined to be an integral part of the event. Examples of activities where it would be appropriate to approve food purchase would include a design charrette held in the evening, where the meal is consumed as part of the event and replaces a meal otherwise missed by attending the event.

Peer Learning

Applicants must allocate 3-5% of their total direct costs to participate in SGC facilitated peer learning sessions with all RCC Grantees. Using this set-aside, Collaboratives will create a peer learning team that will participate in these sessions. The peer learning team should be comprised of 2-6 Collaborative members, representing different organizations within the partnership. There will be two in-person peer learning sessions (anticipated for the second and third year of the grant term), and the rest will be conducted virtually via Zoom.

Evaluation

Applicants must allocate 3-5% of their total direct costs for evaluation costs. Collaboratives can use this set-aside for staff time to develop and implement the Evaluation Plan (as part of the RCC Action Plan), collect and compile Annual Report data, and engage with the implementation

TA provider through evaluation advisory sessions, structured reflection discussions, and other services.

Collaborative Partnership Structure Partners

Applicants may set aside up to 15% of total direct costs from the budget to account for new Partners added during the grant term.

Indirect Costs

Applicants may set aside up to 30% of total direct costs for indirect costs. Indirect costs represent the expenses of doing business that are not readily identified with a particular grant activity but are necessary for the general operation of the organization. These are costs incurred by the recipient to administer the grant, or costs incurred by subgrantees to perform the tasks necessary to fulfill the deliverables outlined in these guidelines. These include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- Office space
- Supplies
- Legal or management oversight
- Prorated general liability, workers' compensation (may be included in payroll), and automotive insurance

Ineligible Costs

- Costs that occur outside of the Grant Agreement term
- Direct and indirect construction costs
- Direct lobbying: behavior that seeks to influence an elected or public official on an issue, such as passage of a legislative bill.
- Indirect costs in excess of 30% of total direct costs
- Out-of-state travel and incidental costs associated with travel
- The following costs associated with community engagement and outreach:
 - Direct cash benefits or subsidies to participants
 - Alcoholic refreshments
 - Participant incentives, such as door prizes or swag bags. This is distinct from participant compensation where participants are providing data or service to the program through their participation.
 - General meetings that do not specifically discuss or advance implementation of the RCC Project

F. Eligible Project Area

There are two components to the Project Area: Region and Communities of Focus. The purpose of this is to foster both place-based capacity building and enhance regional coordination.

Region

The Region is the boundary of the Collaborative's work. Applicants must identify and define their region based on shared natural, political, and built environment systems; climate risks; and/or other shared challenges or dynamics. Applicants may choose to work within a 'region' that is pre-defined by another initiative or designation to the extent that it is helpful to accomplishing their workplan, but doing so will not receive any preference in scoring or award selection. **Whichever way an applicant determines their regional boundary, the Region must be contiguous.** RCC does not fund statewide Collaboratives. Please review the Project Area Guidance resource released with the NOFA for considerations when determining an RCC Region.

Communities of Focus

The Communities of Focus are the census tracts or tribal areas representing the communities and neighborhoods where the Collaborative will conduct its place-based work. A Community of Focus could be a single census tract or tribal area **or** a cluster of census tracts or tribal areas. Collaboratives must serve a minimum of two Communities of Focus and must meet **either** of the following two eligibility criteria:

1. At least 75% of the census tracts or tribal areas identified within the Communities of Focus must meet Senate Bill 1072's definition of under-resourced:
 - Disadvantaged Communities according to CalEnviroScreen: census tracts or tribal lands identified as disadvantaged by the California Environmental Protection Agency (Health & Safety Code § 39711); **or**
 - AB 1550 Low Income Communities: census tracts or tribal lands with median household incomes at or below 80% of the statewide median income or with median household incomes at or below the threshold designated as low income by the Department of Housing and Community Development's list of state income limits adopted pursuant to Section 50093 of the California Health and Safety Code (Health & Safety Code § 39713, subd.(d)); **or**
 - Department of Water Resources Disadvantaged Communities: census tracts or tribal lands with a median household income less than 80% of the statewide average (Public Resource Code § 75005 subd.(g)).
2. At least 75% of the census tracts or tribal areas identified within the Communities of Focus must meet SB 1072's definition of under-resourced **or** be Tribal Lands (according to the definition below) **as long as at least 50% of the Communities of Focus meet SB 1072's definition of under-resourced.**
 - Located in Indian Country as defined by 18 U.S. Code (USC) 1151;
 - Within the limits of a Rancheria under the jurisdiction of the United States Government; **or**
 - Held in trust by the United States for an Indian tribe or individual; **or**
 - Held by an Indian tribe or individual subject to a restriction by the United States against alienation; **or**

- Owned by a Tribal Entity in fee; **or**
- Held in trust for the benefit of a Tribal Entity within the state of California.

For the purposes of this program, Tribal Lands do not need to be included in the SB535 Disadvantaged Communities Map to qualify. However, tribes must provide evidence that this land qualifies under the RCC program’s definition of Tribal Lands. The different Project Area requirements are meant to address the fact that that some tribal lands may not be fully reflected in the State’s various disadvantaged communities or low-income communities mapping tools.

The Round 2 application materials include a new mapping tool and Project Area Guidance to support applicants to determine eligible Communities of Focus and establish a feasible workplan. It is important applicants consider the quality and depth of the proposed work within the Communities of Focus with the number of Communities of Focus selected.

Connecting the Regional and Place-Based Components

The purpose of the program is to enable meaningful capacity building activities to advance climate action in under-resourced communities. Collaboratives must conduct place-based capacity building work within their Communities of Focus to identify and pursue climate projects to implement within these census tracts or tribal areas. The regional aspect of the program aims to help Collaboratives leverage, complement, and build on existing regional efforts. It also provides an avenue for the Communities of Focus to engage in region-wide coordination and policymaking, and to share best practices and lessons learned from their place-based projects.

Both at the regional and place-based levels, Collaboratives can support public engagement to inform planning efforts, build effective relationships between government entities and communities, build the capacity of community-based organizations to engage in planning and policy initiatives, and provide technical assistance to inform specific elements of plans or policies. This work is integral to establishing a policy environment that informs a steady stream of projects, directs funding and resources to specific community needs, and supports competitiveness for funding.

III. Preparing and Submitting an Application

Applicants will submit applications electronically. SGC will provide additional information about the application process with the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) and application materials.

A. Application Process

RCC includes a two-step application process. Both steps are required.

1. Pre-Proposal

Applicants must submit a Pre-Proposal by September 6, 2023 at 5:00 PM PT. The purpose of the Pre-Proposal is to help applicants, TA providers, and SGC assess whether applicants are on track to submit a complete, competitive application that meets all threshold requirements and to identify sections of the application that will need increased support. While Pre-Proposals are not scored, SGC will provide feedback on Pre-Proposals to help applicants strengthen their Full Proposal. Submitting a Pre-Proposal is required to move forward to the Full Proposal phase.

2. Full Proposal

Applicants must submit a Full Proposal by December 6, 2023 at 5:00 PM PT. Building off the Pre-Proposal, the Full Proposal requires more detail and final versions of the budget and workplan. Applicants can modify their project between the Pre-Proposal and Full Proposal.

B. Application Help/Technical Assistance

SGC will provide third-party technical assistance (TA) to support application development. The third-party TA team includes the following organizations: Estolano Advisors, Better World Group, California Coalition for Rural Housing, and the Institute for Local Government.

After the Pre-Proposal phase, applicants will be paired with an individual TA provider to support applicants in the development of a Full Proposal. TA providers can provide application support through review of any application components, including:

- Mapping support
- Workplan and budget development
- Application coordination
- Review of narrative responses

Capacity Building Office Hours

The TA team and RCC staff will host weekly Capacity Building Office Hours on Wednesday July 12-September 6 from 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. PT. These are a space for previous and prospective applicants to ask questions about program requirements and workshop application concepts. Please register using [this Zoom link](#).

Consultation Service Calls

The TA team will host a limited number of one-on-one Consultation Service Calls for applicants who submitted a Pre-Proposal or Full Proposal to Round 1 of the RCC Program. Priority will be given to applicants from tribal, rural, and unincorporated communities. Applicants who meet these criteria can contact RCC staff for more information at CACE@sgc.ca.gov.

Application Workshops

RCC staff will hold optional application workshops via Zoom in mid-to late July. Please see *I. About the RCC Program - G. Timeline* for the dates and Zoom registration links or access them on the RCC resources page.

C. Threshold Criteria

The following threshold criteria must be met for an application to be thoroughly reviewed and scored.

General Completeness

- All application materials are submitted and complete
- Requested funding amount falls within the funding track award range

Applicant Eligibility

- The Managing Partner is an eligible applicant
- The Managing Partner provides appropriate documentation, confirming ability to apply for and receive RCC funds if awarded (letter of authorization, resolution, etc.)
- All Partners are eligible applicants

Eligible Project Area

- The Region is contiguous and does not cover the entire state of California
- 75% of the Communities of Focus are under-resourced (according to either criteria) and comprised of a minimum of two census tracts or tribal land areas

D. Application Components and Scoring Criteria

Application Components

To be considered eligible for funding, the application should be fully complete and submitted before the due date. The application includes the components listed below.

- **Narrative Responses:** Applicants will respond to a series of questions that offer detailed description of the applicant's project proposal.
- **Workplan, Timeline, and Budget:** Applicants will complete an Excel workbook that outlines the proposed work, timeline of work, and budget breakdown.
- **Project Area Map:** Applicants will provide a map that identifies their Region and Communities of Focus.
- **Draft Partnership Agreement:** Together the Managing Partner and Partners will develop a draft Partnership Agreement that details the organization and decision-making processes of their CPS. The Partnership Agreement does not need to be signed unless awarded.
- **Letters of Commitment for all Partners:** All Partners must submit a signed letter to demonstrate their commitment to and ability to contribute to their RCC project if awarded.
- **Resolution or Letter of Authorization for the Managing Partner:** Managing Partners must verify their ability to accept and execute the grant if awarded through one of these two forms of documentation. Please see the paragraph below for more details.

If the Managing Partner is a public agency, they must provide evidence of an adopted formal resolution in the application that includes an authorization to apply for and accept an RCC Grant, and authority to execute all related documents if awarded. If the Managing Partner is a tribe or an eligible applicant that is not a public agency, they must include either an authorization in the form of a formal letter **or** a resolution passed by the organization’s governing body that includes authorization to apply for and accept an RCC Grant, and authority to execute all related documents if awarded.

Scoring Criteria

The following scoring criteria will be applied at the Full Proposal stage, following the Pre-Proposal. The table shows the maximum number of points each component of the application can earn, and the text below describes how each of these components will be evaluated. Additional information on the application process will be provided in the NOFA.

| Application Components | Total Points Possible |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Vision | 5 |
| Project Need and Region | 40 |
| Program Objectives | 40 |
| Collaborative Partnership Structure | 40 |
| Workplan and Budget | 25 |
| Interviews | 15 |
| Full Proposal Total | 150 points |
| Proposal & Interview Total | 165 points |

Vision – 5 points

The vision statement communicates a concise set of desired outcomes for the Collaborative’s work. Reviewers will evaluate the extent to which the vision statement effectively communicates the capacity building needs of under-resourced communities served by the Collaborative, demonstrates how the proposed tasks would address those needs, and reflects the RCC Program Objectives with achievable outcomes.

Project Need and Region – 40 points

This section should provide readers with a clear justification of the geographic focus and capacity building activities proposed by the Collaborative. The project need should be specific and clearly outline the climate, environmental, socio-economic, and community-wide factors

that necessitate capacity building at the various scales proposed by the Collaborative. This application component will be evaluated by the following criteria:

1. Applicant makes a clear case for their definition of the Region and Communities of Focus as proposed, with an explanation of the factors that identify them as a region, and why the under-resourced communities were selected. Applicant provides a clear map of the geographic Region and Communities of Focus identified to justify Project Area focus. (8 points)
2. Proposed workplan demonstrates focus on the communities with the most need. Applicant considers both the proportion of under-resourced communities served above threshold requirements and the proportion of under-resourced communities within the overall region. (8 points)
3. Applicant provides a clear description of priority climate issues and catastrophic natural disasters and/or extreme weather events experienced by communities within the Region as well as any gaps in data or knowledge about climate issues or potential impacts facing the Project Area. (8 points)
4. Applicant provides a clear description of the Region and Communities of Focus' previous success and/or challenges in receiving climate-related funding to address priority climate-related issues, as well as the extent to which any funded projects address under-resourced communities' climate-related needs. (8 points)
5. Applicant demonstrates awareness of existing capacity building efforts within the Project Area and alignment with existing activities. Applicant additionally explains how the Collaborative will add value to and direct existing efforts to the needs of under-resourced communities served by this grant. (8 points)

Program Objectives – 40 points

Proposed tasks and narrative responses should provide additional detail around about the collaborative's approach to achieve desired outcomes. Tasks should align with overall RCC Program Objectives: developing actionable plans and projects, building social infrastructure, centering community engagement and decision making, and developing equity-centered processes. This application component will be evaluated by the following four criteria:

1. Develop Actionable Plans and Projects (10 points)
 - Proposed tasks will lead to the development and alignment of climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience plans and projects.
 - Proposed tasks should support the creation and/or refinement of policies and processes at the local/regional government level to support proposed projects.
 - Proposed tasks should focus on aligning plans, polices, funding resources, and other necessary inputs to support communities in pursuing competitive funding.
2. Building Social Infrastructure (10 points)
 - Proposed tasks should build enduring and trusting relationships between Collaborative members and with external parties across the Project Area (such as residents and local governments) that will better position communities to coordinate on the development and implementation of climate related projects.

- Proposed tasks should develop new skills, competencies, knowledge, and partnerships within communities to inform climate related projects development and implementation.
3. Centering Community Engagement and Decision Making in Collaborative Activities (10 points)
 - All tasks should promote and center effective community engagement and decision making.
 - Community engagement tasks are included in the workplan, with descriptions of diverse and appropriate community engagement tasks that will be used throughout the duration of the grant, including how the public will remain informed of and engaged in Collaborative activities.
 4. Develop Equity-Centered Processes within the Community (10 points)
 - Proposed tasks will develop or improve local processes for under-resourced community residents, community-based organizations, and Tribes to co-lead decisions made about climate change-related priorities and projects at the local and/or regional level.

Collaborative Partnership Structure – 40 points

The Collaborative Partnership Structure (CPS) is the way in which the Managing Partner, Partners, Supporters, other involved individuals and entities organize themselves, facilitate project management, and work to build capacity within and across partners. The CPS should have a strong and diverse partnership with a Managing Partner who has sufficient capacity to lead the implementation of the workplan. Applicants should consider the different organization types, expertise, level of capacity, and community relationships the partnership would offer to the Region and Communities of Focus. Finally, the processes, tasks, and features that guide the functioning of the CPS demonstrate the Collaborative’s commitment to equity, ability to self-govern, and likelihood of sustaining itself beyond the grant term. This application component is evaluated on the following five aspects:

1. Collaborative includes a diverse representation of partners that bring different skills and knowledge to advance holistic, multi-benefit climate projects. (8 points)
2. Managing Partner demonstrates the experience and organizational capacity necessary to implement the RCC proposal. (8 points)
3. Applicants provide a clear and compelling description of the Collaborative members’ relationships and how these existing or emerging relationships will contribute to the success of the partnership. (8 points)
4. Applicants demonstrate subject matter expertise and commitment to community engagement and partnership. (8 points)
5. Application includes a Partnership Agreement with effective and equitable governance structures, protocols, and other strategies to effectively sustain the partnership. (8 points)

Workplan and Budget – 25 points

The workplan is a set of capacity building tasks that align with RCC Program Objectives and collectively work to achieve the Collaborative’s vision. The applicant should provide a workplan that includes a comprehensive list of proposed tasks that correspond to the required and optional program activities listed in *II. Before Applying - C. Eligible Activities*, a timeline for completion of key tasks and deliverables, and the Collaborative members involved in implementing each task. The budget table should provide reviewers with a clear understanding of how the applicants have allocated time and funding resources to various elements of the workplan. The budget should allocate resources across entities within the Collaborative to lead or support on specific tasks that reflect their strengths and experience. The budget strikes a balance between programmatic and staff costs and direct expenses to ensure effective project implementation. This application component will be evaluated by the following three criteria:

1. Applicant provides a comprehensive workplan that includes a description of proposed tasks, subtasks, and associated required and optional program activities; a timeline for completion of key tasks and deliverables; and Collaborative members involved in implementing each task and subtask. Workplan provides sufficient description of how tasks will advance the RCC Program Objectives. Workbook includes a feasible timeline for completion of key tasks and deliverables. (8 points)
2. The workplan addresses a diversity of climate-related issues and each Collaborative partner’s respective capacity, strengths, mission, and area of focus have been taken into consideration. (8 points)
3. Budget and budget justification demonstrate meaningful costs, are well-aligned with the workplan, and correspond to project objectives and RCC program goals. Sufficient funding has been allocated to ensure effective implementation. (9 points)

Interview – 15 points

Top scoring applicants that have met threshold requirements will be invited to a 1-hour finalist interview with SGC staff. These interviews enable reviewers to ask clarifying questions and dig deeper into the applicant’s proposals. Applicants will receive up to 15 additional points from the interview portion in addition to the 150 base points available from the submitted application components. Applicants are encouraged to include as many project partners as they would like in the interview in order to demonstrate the strength of partnerships, describe proposed activities, and convey the Collaborative’s commitment to equity. Interview responses will be assessed to the degree applicants’ responses:

1. Present a clear vision of the Collaborative’s proposed tasks and a meaningful approach to capacity building. (3 points)
2. Articulates how the proposed workplan will leverage existing efforts and/or catalyze new initiatives within the project area and increase capacity to access future funding. (3 points)
3. Demonstrate experience and commitment to working with under-resourced communities within the Project Area. (3 points)
4. Demonstrates strength and diversity of the partnership and vision for the role of each Partner in the CPS and the workplan. (3 points)

5. Demonstrate a clear understanding of the RCC Program Objectives and how the proposed project would address them. (3 points)

IV. After Applying

A. Confirmation of Application Submission

Applications will be submitted to an online platform called Submittable. More details about uploading materials to Submittable will be provided in the NOFA. Applicants missing application information will be notified by RCC staff. If applicants are contacted because of missing information, the applicant will have two (2) business days to provide the missing information, otherwise the application will be deemed incomplete. Please note that this process does not act as a deadline extension. Applicants should submit complete proposals. Evidence of purposeful submission of an incomplete application to acquire more time will result in disqualification of the application.

B. Public Records Act

All applications and submitted materials are subject to the Public Records Act (GC § 6250) requirements, and certain information may be publicly disclosed under those requirements. Materials will remain confidential through the evaluation process, after the applicant submits their Full Proposal. However, all submitted documents can be made publicly available records after SGC posts the awards or the solicitation is cancelled. Confidential tribal data and information can be excluded from responses to these requests.

C. Application Review Process and Scoring

After the submission date, SGC and an interagency review panel will review and score the applications submitted. SGC staff will recommend awards to the two top-scoring applications from each funding track. In order to facilitate geographic diversity of funding as directed by Senate Bill 1072 (Statutes of 2018, ch. 377 § 711731 (b)(1)), the remaining available funds will be awarded to the next highest scoring applications located in counties that have not yet received an RCC award (in either Round 1 or Round 2), regardless of award size.

D. Unselected Applicants

RCC staff are available to host application debrief calls with unselected applicants. If a submitted project seems like a better fit for another grant program, RCC staff will try to direct applicants accordingly.

V. Awarded Applications

This section outlines elements of RCC that Grantees should expect to meet.

A. Grant Agreement and Administration

Applicants are responsible for carefully reading these guidelines, asking appropriate questions promptly, and drafting and submitting their applications consistent with program requirements. Grantees will commit to implementing their project as described in their application through the Grant Agreement, which will reference these guidelines. During the Post-Award Consultation period, SGC will send the Grant Agreement, including the general terms and conditions, to the Grantee to review, approve, and sign. SGC reserves the right to negotiate with awarded applicants to change the project workplan, the level of funding, or both.

SGC, through its programs, is dedicated to transparency and compliance with state auditing requirements and applicable records retention/disclosure rules. Applicants should expect that the Grant Agreement will reflect consistency with these standards and ensure compliance with applicable rules and requirements.

Grant Agreements will be executed between SGC and the Managing Partner only. SGC will not enter contractual relationships with Partners. The Managing Partner will be responsible for compiling and submitting all advance payment requests, invoices, and reporting documents for themselves and all Partners. Upon receipt of appropriate documentation, funds will be paid to the Managing Partners, who will be responsible for dispersing payment to Partners, as approved by SGC. The Grant Agreement is considered fully executed once the Managing Partner and SGC's authorized signatories sign. Once the Grant Agreement is fully executed, SGC will issue a Notice to Proceed, and then work can begin. Grantees cannot request reimbursement for any costs incurred or work completed before grant execution.

B. Disbursement and Reporting

Advanced Payment

SGC may provide advanced payments to reduce barriers and ensure RCC activities are initiated in a timely manner. Advance payments can total up to 25% of the full grant award. SGC may exceed the 25% limit if SGC determines that the project requires a larger advance, and the recipient entity provides sufficient justification and documentation. All Collaboratives will be required to prioritize Partners that experience low cash flow to receive advances. To receive advance pay, the Grantee must do the following:

At the time of the grant agreement:

- Demonstrate good standing with [California's Franchise Tax Board](#)
- Provide a spending plan for each Partner receiving advance payment
- Through the Grant Agreement, assure that they will:
 - Revert all unused moneys to the state if they are not liquidated within the timeline specified in the grant agreement or in the case of non-compliance/misuse of funds
 - Communicate and document changes to the spending plan

Before payment

- Complete an advance payment request form that includes an itemized budget for the period of the grant the costs will cover and to provide a spending timeline including anticipated spend down over a set period of time

After prior advance pay is expended, the Grantee will provide a progress report that includes:

- A high-level summary of work completed
- Itemized receipts
- Invoice for grant activities that were not covered by the advance payment (if applicable)
- Their next advance payment request form (if applicable)

Advanced payments must be deposited into a federally insured account. If advanced funds are deposited into an interest-bearing account, any accumulated interest shall be deemed to be grant moneys, subject to federal laws and regulations, and the recipient shall report interest earned on the advanced payment to SGC. Please note that a waiver of sovereign immunity is **not** required for tribal Grantees to receive advanced payment.

Reimbursement

The remaining 75% of grant funds will be reimbursed. Grantees can receive reimbursements on a monthly or quarterly basis. Per the Prompt Payment Act, SGC is required to pay properly submitted, undisputed invoices within 45 calendar days of the initial receipt.

Reporting

SGC will provide templates for the advance payment request form and summary report, workplan, budget table, and invoice form. These documents are required to record the project's expenditures and assess general progress on deliverables. The Managing Partner, as the liaison between SGC and the Partners, will participate in regular check-in meetings with SGC, aligned with the invoicing schedule. Grantees must also submit Annual Reports as outlined in *II. Before Applying - D. Project Deliverables*.

C. Implementation Technical Assistance

Third-Party Support

As a capacity building grant program, the RCC Program has multiple technical assistance (TA) components. SGC will contract with a third-party TA team to provide implementation support to Grantees. The TA that Collaboratives will conduct through grant activities is distinct from the TA provided through the third-party support. The TA team will deliver direct assistance to each Collaborative, focused on operational activities, facilitating the statewide evaluation, and fostering peer learning.

Operational TA

Operational TA activities will support Collaboratives develop, refine, and maintain their structure, systems, and processes as well as foster and sustain their partnerships. The TA team will provide Grantees with a menu of TA services to create a tailored TA plan for each Collaborative.

Evaluation TA

Using a statewide RCC evaluation framework, the TA team will provide Grantees with evaluation support. This includes helping with the development and implementation of Evaluation Plans, tracking and compiling data for the Annual Reports, facilitating reflection discussions.

Peer Learning

SGC and the TA team will host quarterly peer learning sessions. Collaboratives will create peer learning teams that will participate in peer learning. Peer learning teams should be comprised of 2-6 Collaborative members representing different organizations within the partnership. There will be two in-person peer learning sessions (anticipated for the second and third year of the grant term), and the rest will be conducted virtually via Zoom.

RCC Program Staff Support

RCC program staff will provide additional implementation assistance to Collaboratives. This includes support with administrative requirements, identifying funding opportunities, and facilitating connections to state agencies.

VI. Appendix

Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

Applicant - The Managing Partner and Partners are collectively referred to as “applicant.”

Application or Proposal - A submittal comprised of responses and supporting documents to apply for the grant.

Awarded - An agency commits funding to implement projects (e.g., executed a grant agreement with a Grantee; transferred funds to another agency or program administrator).

Capacity Building - The process of strengthening local coordination, leadership, knowledge, skills, expertise, and access to resources in vulnerable communities to help to develop or increase the ability of that community to independently compete for grants and implement projects in the future. Capacity building activities include, but are not limited to, identifying and planning for needed climate change mitigation, adaptation, resilience projects in a given region and identifying the tools and resources needed to successfully access, apply for, and receive grant funding.

Climate Adaptation - Adjustment in natural or human systems to a new or changing environment. Adaptation to climate change refers to adjustment in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli or their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities.

Climate Mitigation - A human intervention to reduce the human impact on the climate system; it includes strategies to reduce greenhouse gas sources and emissions and enhance greenhouse gas sinks.

Climate Resiliency or Climate Resilience - The capacity of any entity – an individual, a community, an organization, or a natural system – to prepare for disruptions, recover from shocks and stresses, and adapt and grow from a disruptive experience.

Collaborative Partnership Structure - The Collaborative Partnership Structure is a model for collaborative or shared governance. For the purposes of RCC, the Collaborative Partnership Structure guides the Collaborative’s organization, decision-making processes, financial relationships, and execution of the scope of work.

Communities of Focus - The Communities of Focus are the census tracts or tribal lands representing the communities and neighborhoods where the Collaborative would conduct its place-based work.

Community-Based Organization - A public or private nonprofit organization of demonstrated effectiveness that is representative of a community or significant segments of a community and provides educational or related services to individuals in the community.

Community Engagement - The process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those people.

Direct Costs - Costs directly tied to the implementation of the RCC grant, including, but not limited to personnel costs, subcontracts, equipment costs, travel expenses, etc.

Disadvantaged Communities - Designation of census tracts and physical locations used to identify the areas most affected by pollution and the people most vulnerable to its effects, based on geographic, socioeconomic, public health, and environmental hazards criteria. The California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) historically bases designations on analyses conducted by the California Communities Environmental Health Screening Tool (CalEnviroScreen) but can also exercise discretion in developing other criteria and methods.

Fiscal Sponsor - A legal entity with legal authority, history, and capacity to administer state funds. If a Managing Partner has a fiscal sponsor, the fiscal sponsor would receive the funds and administer the grant on behalf of the Collaborative.

Grant Agreement - Arrangement between the State and Grantee specifying the payment of funds to be used for grants by the State for the performance of specific RCC Program Objectives within a specific grant performance period by the Grantee.

Grantee - Designated Managing Partner that has a Grant Agreement with the State.

Indirect Costs - Indirect costs represent the expenses of doing business that are not readily identified with a particular grant activity but are necessary for the general operation of the organization. These are costs incurred by the recipient to administer the grant, or costs incurred by subgrantees to perform the tasks necessary to fulfill the grant requirements. May account for up to 30% of the total RCC award.

Interagency Review Panel – The panel responsible for reviewing and scoring RCC applications; will be comprised of a various state agency representatives.

Multi-Benefits – Also referred to as “co-benefits.” These are added benefits that go beyond meeting a policy’s main goal, like climate change mitigation. For example, most policies designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions also indirectly benefit the economy, air quality, public health, and reduce energy costs (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency). Co-benefits may fall under the following topics: public health, land use, transportation, economy, housing, public infrastructure, public safety, social equity, environmental conditions (e.g., carbon sequestration, natural resource management, water quality, air quality), energy, and agriculture.

Nonprofit Organization - Any nonprofit corporation qualified to do business in California and qualified pursuant to subdivision (c)(3) under Section 501 of the Internal Revenue Code.

Partners - Entities that enter into a partnership with the Managing Partner to implement RCC grant activities. Can be considered “co-applicants” or “subgrantee.”

Partnership Agreement - A Partnership Agreement is an agreement between four or more parties that is not legally binding and outlines the responsibilities of each of the parties to the agreement. This is required of all members of the Collaborative Partnership Structure.

Peer Learning - The transfer of knowledge, skills, and experience between entities in facilitated training and network sessions.

Post-Award Consultation - Prior to the execution of the grant agreement, a period where terms and conditions of the grant agreement are determined and finalized.

Region - A region is defined by shared natural, political, and built environment systems; climate risks; and/or other shared challenges or dynamics. For the purposes of the RCC program, a region must be contiguous.

Supporters - For the purposes of the RCC program, Supporters are entities that the Collaborative will work with to leverage community engagement, policy making, and technical assistance opportunities. Supporters are not funded by the RCC grant and instead plan to offer in-kind time and resources to help advance the work of the Collaborative.

Technical Assistance (TA) - The process of providing the necessary education and resources for climate change mitigation and adaptation projects for any of the following:

- Project development
- The successful and appropriate expenditure of grant money for the successful completion of climate change mitigation and adaptation projects.
- Post-application and project implementation assistance

Traditional Ecological Knowledge - Although it is common to refer to "traditional knowledge(s)" as individual pieces of information, this term also refers to traditional "knowledge systems" (TKs) that are deeply embedded in indigenous ways of life. These guidelines use the phrase "traditional knowledges" deliberately in plural form to emphasize that there are diverse forms of traditional knowledge and knowledge systems that must be recognized as unique to each tribe and knowledge holder because knowledges are emergent from the symbiotic relationship of indigenous peoples and places—a nature-culture nexus.

Appendix B: Activity Waiver Process and Criteria

Activity Waiver Process

During the Pre-Proposal phase, applicants can complete an Activity Waiver Request Form if they believe that ONE mandatory activity from activity types 1 and 2 is unnecessary or otherwise inappropriate for their proposal. Please note that applicants cannot waive evaluation and peer learning activities. The Activity Waiver Request Form will be released as an online form on July 6 with the NOFA and application materials. Applicants will have two opportunities within the Pre-Proposal phase to submit their waiver.

- **August 11:** Applicants who submit their Activity Waiver by August 11 will receive their response in advance of the Pre-Proposal due date, and if approved, may submit a Pre-Proposal and Full Proposal that reflects their waived activity.
- **September 6:** Applicants who submit their Activity Waiver by September 6 will receive their response along with their Pre-Proposal feedback, and if approved, will be able to develop a Full Proposal omitting the waived activity.

In the Activity Waiver Request Form, applicants will be required to provide the following information.

- Requirement: Which mandatory activity are you requesting to omit from your project proposal?
- Justification:
 - Please provide a short description of your proposed project.
 - Please describe why this required activity is unnecessary or otherwise inappropriate for your proposed project.
 - Please describe how your proposed project would still meet RCC Program Objectives without this required activity.

Activity Waiver Criteria

SGC will assess requests based on the following criteria:

Approved

SGC will approve waiver requests that provide a thorough and convincing justification describing the reasons why the required activity is unnecessary or otherwise inappropriate for the Collaborative's proposed project and how the proposed scope would still advance RCC Program Objectives without it. When applicable, SGC recommends that applicants provide the following information in their waiver request to strengthen their justification:

- Applicant provides clear reasoning that demonstrates why the required activity is inappropriate and/or unnecessary given local context and the partner organizations involved.
- Applicant provides an explanation of existing efforts that currently fulfill this required activity and how conducting it through RCC would be duplicative, not additive.

- Applicant demonstrates efforts to include the mandatory activity in the scope of their proposed project, such as any attempts to partner with organizations that have relevant expertise, explaining why these efforts were unsuccessful.
- Applicant makes a compelling case that the Collaborative is not yet ready to meaningfully implement the activity during the grant term and requires capacity building through the RCC Program to be able to conduct this mandatory activity in the future.

Unapproved

SGC will not approve waiver requests that do not demonstrate how the proposed project would align with RCC Program Objectives without this mandatory activity. Waiver requests that do not provide sufficient justification describing compelling reasons why the Collaborative seeks to omit the mandatory activity from their RCC projects will also not be approved.

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