



Regional Planning Partnership

July 15, 2009

Round 4 of SACOG Community Design Funding Program

Issue: The guidelines for the fourth round of funding for the Community Design Program have been released, and SACOG is seeking RPP representatives to serve the program selection committee.

Recommendation: None; this is an information item.

Discussion: The SACOG Community Design Program and Application Guidelines for 2009-11 (Round 4) have been released. As part of the current Metropolitan Transportation Plan, the Community Design program provides financial incentives to implement the Blueprint Principles. Cities, counties, transit and air quality districts in Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo and Yuba counties are eligible to apply on a competitive basis. Placer and El Dorado counties have their own programs.

The SACOG Board of Directors approved funding a minimum of \$12 million for Round 4; more funding could be recommended by SACOG staff, depending on the outcome of the selection process. The application requirements are similar to the Round 3 application guidelines, with two key differences: First, any project receiving funding in Round 4 must utilize the funding by no later than September 30, 2013; and second, jurisdictions that received funding during Round 1 (in 2004) or Round 2 (2006) must submit an updated scope of work and timeline to complete their projects as part of the process for applying in Round 4. If the recipient jurisdiction cannot complete its Round 1 or 2 project in a timely manner (as determined by SACOG and Caltrans staff), then staff will seek the Board's direction to initiate steps to de-program these non-performing projects.

The key dates for applicants are: August 4, 1 p.m., Program Orientation Workshop at SACOG; August 19 deadline for pre-submittal letters; August 28 for approval of final Round 1 and Round 2 scopes of work/timelines; and September 3 for Round 4 applications. Applicants are responsible for reviewing and following all of the instructions in the "Community Design Program and Application Guidelines 2009-11" document.

One of the two review committees for the program, the Community Design Working Group, has up to four seats for Regional Planning Partnership members. The Working Group mainly evaluates the applications based on their ability to implement the Blueprint Principles and their deliverability. One or two seats are dedicated to project engineers, one seat for an urban designer, and one seat for a community group member. The Working Group will have one 90 minute orientation meeting in late August, and three or four 3-hours meetings in September where it makes its recommendations. SACOG staff will seek volunteers from the RPP to serve on the Working Group.

Attached is an FAQ document summarizing the key components of the program. The "Community Design Program and Application Guidelines 2009-11" document may be downloaded at <http://www.sacog.org/regionalfunding/communitydesign.cfm>

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Attachment

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Round 4 SACOG Community Design Funding Program (2009-11)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

(last updated June 19, 2009)

This document provides the basic information about the program for potential applicants for the 2009-11 SACOG Community Design Program. However, if applying, the applicant is expected to fully review and follow the instructions provided in the document “Community Design Program and Application Guidelines 2009-11”, which may be downloaded at:

<http://www.sacog.org/regionalfunding/communitydesign.cfm>

If there are any clarifications or information on the guidelines after June 19, 2009, then this FAQ will be updated on the SACOG website at www.sacog.org

Note: This program is only open to jurisdictions in Sacramento, Sutter, Yuba and Yolo Counties; El Dorado and Placer Counties have their own independent programs.

What is the Community Design Funding Program?

The Community Design Program was established in 2003 by the SACOG Board of Directors to provide financial assistance to implement the principles of the Blueprint Project: mixed land uses, transportation options, housing choice, compact development, use existing assets, quality design, and natural resource protection. The program offers funding for projects by local jurisdictions that implement these principles.

How much funding will be awarded in this round?

Staff will recommend that the SACOG Board approve a minimum of \$12 million for Round 4 of the program, which is the 2009-11 funding cycle. Staff will also propose that the Board may be requested to fund more depending on the selection process and the recommendations made by the two review committees.

What kinds of projects are eligible?

Because federal transportation funds are used for this program, awarded projects must be “federal aid eligible”. This means that projects must have a significant element involving transportation – the construction of infrastructure, environmental review, design or right-of-way purchase are general tasks that are eligible for these funds. The most common prototype project is one where the grant funds street improvements along a corridor that has infill development with private capital committed.

Planning activities by themselves are not eligible. The main reason is the source of funds in this round do not allow for pure planning projects in most cases.

Because the issue of eligibility is so critical to the program, each project is reviewed on a case-by-case basis for eligibility. Applicants must submit a pre-submittal letter to SACOG; and, in return, SACOG and Caltrans staff will reply with a letter stating whether the project is eligible and any foreseeable concerns the project is raising. Potential applicants are required to work

with their public works staff or equivalent who are trained in managing federal aid requirements, and with SACOG staff throughout the application, selection and funding stages of the program.

Who can apply? What jurisdictions are eligible?

Local jurisdictions in Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo and Yuba Counties that have a master agreement with Caltrans to receive federal transportation funding are eligible to apply for Community Design Program funds. This may include cities, counties, air districts, and transit districts. Potential applicants unaware of their eligibility are advised to check with SACOG or Caltrans staff. Jurisdictions in El Dorado and Placer Counties have a separate Memorandum of Understanding with SACOG and receive their share of federal aid through a different process.

Are applicants required to provide a local match?

Yes. The recipient must provide a minimum of 11.47% match in non-federal funds, as is required in all federal aid funding projects. The selection committee may construe a higher match percentage by the applicant as a stronger application.

What are the critical dates?

The most important date is the applications are due on 4 p.m., Thursday, September 3, 2009. The applications guidelines will be released by SACOG on Friday, June 19, 2009, if the SACOG Board of Directors approves the proposed guideline. A pre-submittal letter is required before an applicant is permitted to submit an application; the last day that SACOG will accept pre-submittal letters is August 19. There will be two, identical, optional Program Overview/Grantwriting 101 Workshop on Wednesday, July 8 and on Tuesday, August 4th (participants who attend the workshop are offered the incentive of SACOG staff reviewing drafts of applications for general-level comments). The SACOG Board of Directors will be asked to approve the recommended projects on November 19, 2009.

Projects receiving grant funding in Round 4 must be completed by September 30, 2013. The exceptions to this deadline are (1) if SACOG does not have available federal aid funds for the programming year requested by the recipient; (2) if SACOG, Caltrans or a federal agency do not process a programming request in a timely manner; or (3) with approval by the SACOG Board of Directors for a timeline extension.

What are the major key elements of the Program that a potential applicant needs to know about?

Some of the key features of the proposed guidelines for Round 4 are:

- the program is intended to fund projects that promote the implementation of the SACOG Blueprint Principles (compact development, mixed of land uses, transportation options, etc.)
- cities, counties, air districts and transit districts in Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo and Yuba counties are eligible to apply, while jurisdictions in El Dorado and Placer counties have their own programs;
- projects must be federal transportation aid eligible (construction, environmental review, design or right-of-way purchase for transportation infrastructure);

- applicants must provide a pre-submittal letter to SACOG to determine eligibility;
- the applicant's point-of-contact must be trained in managing federal transportation aid and is responsible for all contents submitted in the application;
- interviews will be conducted with applicants who received a funding recommendation from the first of two review committees; and
- applications will be evaluated based on how well they implement the Blueprint principles, the project's realistic ability to be delivered by the program deadline of Sept 30, 2013, and the past performance by the applicant jurisdiction in delivering awarded projects.

What are the major proposed changes since the last round of Community Design Funding?

Generally, the program and application requirements, processes and guidelines remain the mostly the same as the prior cycle, Round 3. The only major proposed addition to the application requirements are that applicants who received funding from the 2003-05 or 2005-07 program cycles (Round 1 or Round 2) will also be required to submit a scope of work, deliverables and timeline for completion of any projects that have not been finished. A jurisdiction's ability to deliver projects will be considered when evaluating Round 4 applications. SACOG must approve the updated scope/timeline/deliverables document for the Round 1 or Round 2 project by August 28. If not approved by then, SACOG will take measures to de-program the project and that jurisdiction will be prohibited from applying in Round 4.

There are three funding categories– what are they, and what do I need to know?

There are three categories of project applications, as defined by the amount of funding requested. First, the most common category, referred to as Category #1 (formerly called "Conventional"), is for federal-aid projects that seek funding between \$100,000 to \$7 million. The types of projects in this category can be varied so long as they are federal-aid eligible. Most projects (except the planning ones, which are not eligible) awarded in past rounds fall into this category.

Category #2 projects are federal-aid eligible "Complete Streets" projects seeking \$2 million to \$7 million. These projects seek improvements within transportation corridors into more pedestrian and transit-friendly environments with associated land use changes.

Category #3 projects seek exactly \$100,000. These projects must be federal-aid eligible, although they may not necessarily be awarded federal funding; this is the only category in which projects may be awarded non-federal funding sources. Only cities and counties may apply for funding in this category, and they are not allowed to submit applications in any other category. The submittal requirements would be less than applications in the other two categories. Applicants may only submit one application. Projects in this category would compete only with others in this category.

What's involved in the application process?

All applicants are expected to review the program and application guidelines. They must submit a pre-application letter before an application may be submitted. Applicants must also submit the application in accordance to the guidelines and with SACOG's letter of reply to the pre-submittal letter.

How will the projects be selected for funding?

There will be two different bodies reviewing the applications. First, the internal SACOG Review Team comprised of staff, Caltrans, and others, will review the pre-submittal letter and provide written comments regarding eligibility and delivery that it would like to see addressed in the application. Then, the Community Design Review Committee, comprised of staff and professionals in related fields from around the region, will review the applications and make funding recommendations based on merit as per the program guidelines. The SACOG Review Team will then interview and negotiate with each recommended recipient on the scope, timeline and deliverables. The team will also factor in an applicant's past performance on delivering Community Design Projects. If the project is considered eligible and deliverable by the team, and the applicant has a solid history of delivering past Community Design Projects, the project will be forwarded to the SACOG Board for funding approval.

What responsibilities do jurisdictions have once SACOG has programmed the awarded funds?

As per prior funding rounds, all recipients must accept the full responsibility of managing federal-aid funds. This is a significant responsibility that can require a lot of reporting and coordination with Caltrans and federal agencies. SACOG will only allow a trained professional in managing federal aid funding for the project.

Also, jurisdictions that receive Community Design Funds are required to deliver their projects according to their applications and subsequent negotiated scopes of work, timelines and deliverables. All projects funding in Round 4 must be completed by September 30, 2013. There are three exceptions described earlier when this deadline may be extended. Applicants who fail to meet the September 30, 2013 deadline and do not receive an extension will lose this funding, plus forfeit the right to apply in the next funding cycle for this program.

If I have questions, who do I contact?

Please contact SACOG Community Design Program Manager, Greg Chew. He can be reached at (916) 340-6227 or at gchew@sacog.org.