



## **Board of Directors Regular Meeting**

**Meeting Date:** 4/19/2018

**Agenda Item No.:** 2018-April-8.

SACOG Board of Directors

**Subject:** Approve 2018 Community Design Program (Round 8) Framework and Release of Program and Application Guidelines (Est. time: 0 minutes)

### **Consent**

**Prepared by:** Greg Chew

**Approved by:** James Corless

**Attachments:** Yes

### **1. Issue:**

Should the Board release the 2018 Community Design Program Guidelines and application in April?

### **2. Recommendation:**

The Transportation Committee recommends that the Board approve the 2018 Community Design Funding Program Policy Framework, thereby authorizing SACOG staff to develop and release the program guidelines and application in late April.

### **3. Background/Analysis:**

Community Design is one of SACOG's traditional competitive transportation funding programs. Every two to three years, a regional funding round allows cities, counties, and other local agencies in Sacramento, Sutter, Yuba and Yolo Counties to apply for regional transportation funds that SACOG manages. The Community Design Program provides financial assistance to local agencies making transportation improvements that support placemaking in their communities. The program is designed to support the seven Blueprint Principles: mixed land uses, transportation options, housing choice, compact development, existing assets usage, quality design, and natural resource protection.

### **4. Discussion/Analysis:**

The 2018 Regional Funding Round will include the eighth round of the Community Design Program. Attachment A is the Program Framework, which includes the purpose of the program, the types of projects that it funds, applicant eligibility, and selection criteria. The Community Design Framework is proposed to remain largely the same from prior funding rounds.

Keeping the Community Design program similar to the last cycle is supported by external

stakeholders. Staff contacted representatives at each of the 19 city and county SACOG (four-county) jurisdictions and other local agencies that are eligible to apply for funding, and received feedback that the program works well. Past applicants from these agencies indicated that the application process provides for effective review and feedback, requires a reasonable amount of project information, and results in transformative projects getting funded. Past applicants particularly like the pre-submittal feedback, the one-on-one assistance, and the non-competitive application category.

The Framework proposed for the 2018 Regional Funding Round upholds the strong points of the Community Design program, but does include one substantive change. The 2018 program increases requirements for sponsors to demonstrate project performance in their applications. Project sponsors will be asked to more fully describe and document how their project will lead to performance metrics that clearly support the Blueprint principles.

The Community Design Program is recommended to be the first Regional Funding Program released in 2018 because the proposed Framework is largely the same as the last cycle. Furthermore, the early release responds to requests from local jurisdictions to stagger the timing of Regional Funding programs so applications are not all due at the same time as other SACOG and State funding programs.

Pending comments from the Board, staff will develop the Community Design program guidelines and application. A release date of April 23, 2018, is anticipated. Community Design applications would be due in mid-June of 2018. The remaining programs comprising the 2018 Regional Funding Round are anticipated to be released after the May Board meeting, with the applications due in July 2018.

## **5. Fiscal Impact/Grant Information:**

There is no impact to the SACOG operating budget, as the staff resources necessary to manage the 2018 Community Design program are already included in the adopted SACOG operating budget.

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

Description

Attachment A: Community Design Framework

## 2018 COMMUNITY DESIGN FUNDING PROGRAM (ROUND 8): SACRAMENTO, SUTTER, YOLO, AND YUBA COUNTIES

The Community Design Program was established in 2003 by the SACOG Board of Directors to provide financial assistance to implement physical placemaking development of the Blueprint Project Principals: mixed land uses, transportation options, housing choice, compact development, use of existing assets, quality design, and natural resource protection. The program offers funding for transportation projects in public right-of-ways by local public agencies that lead to physical development of the Blueprint principles in Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo, and Yuba Counties.

### GOALS AND PRIORITIES

Projects must conform to some of the seven regional Blueprint Principles (more detail on SACOG's website at <https://www.sacog.org/publication/better-ways-grow>

1. transportation choices;
2. housing diversity;
3. compact development;
4. mixed land uses;
5. use of existing assets;
6. natural resource protection; and
7. quality design.

### ELIGIBLE PROJECT TYPES

All projects in the competitive categories must be federal aid eligible and primarily lead to or include construction. Projects must be eligible for Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ), Regional Surface Transportation Plan (RSTP), or State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) funds (unless the project is submitted in the non-competitive category, which would receive SACOG-managed funds).

Generally speaking, federal aid eligible projects are those that significantly contain transportation infrastructure in public right-of-ways. Activities or tasks within the project must be categorized as "construction," "environmental," "design," or "right-of way." Pure planning activities are generally not considered an eligible use for the

Community Design Program (exception: planning is allowed in the non-competitive funding category). The following are examples of projects that are generally considered federal aid eligible:

- Transportation infrastructure – e.g., roadway improvements that promote, bike/pedestrian/transit usage and are directly connected to a land development project, land use plan, or in an existing "Blueprint friendly" community;
- Street corridor revitalization towards more pedestrian-oriented activities;
- Bicycle and pedestrian paths, tunnels, and bridges, or on-street bike lanes;
- Pedestrian improvements in public right-of-ways;
- Streetscaping such as median landscaping, street trees, lighting, and furniture;
- Traffic calming (but not interfering with public transit, bicycling, or walking);
- Transit stop amenities such as shelters, restrooms, and benches.

One critical distinction is that federal aid projects must be for project elements that are considered "over and above" those that are standard requirements if there is a development associated with the project. For instance, if a private development is going in, and the project seeks Community Design funds for street improvements, the improvements must go beyond the jurisdiction's "standard" requirements for that associated development. The private developer may be required to put in sidewalks and crosswalks, but federal aid could pay for textured crosswalks, landscaped medians, and other elements that enhance the pedestrian experience but are not standard conditions of approval.

## Project Selection Process

The application process remains the same as in prior rounds. Two committees will be involved in the review and selection process: the SACOG/Caltrans Review Team and the Community Design Working Group (Working Group). The SACOG/Caltrans Review Team is composed of SACOG and Caltrans staff, and possibly staff from other agencies who are familiar with federal transportation funding requirements. The Working Group is comprised of staff and appointed representatives from geographically diverse areas of the region recruited through SACOG’s staff-level regional advisory committees (e.g., Planners Committee, etc.).

### Community Design Working Group Composition

Expertise	Number
Land Use Planners	3-5
Project Engineers	1-2
Bicycle/ Pedestrian Planning	1
Air Quality	1
Urban Design	1
Transit	1
Community Groups	1
Transportation Demand Management	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>10-13</b>

SACOG staff encourages potential applicants to discuss possible projects. Applicants must submit a pre-submittal letter to SACOG describing the project, and the SACOG/Caltrans Review Team will reply with a letter stating whether the project is eligible and any foreseeable concerns the project is raising. If the project is determined to be eligible, a full application can then be submitted. The Working Group then reviews eligible applications and recommends a prioritized project list to SACOG staff based on the criteria stated in these guidelines. Applicants may be contacted during the project selection process and

requested to provide up to one written email page to clarify questions of the Working Group or the SACOG/Caltrans Review Team.

The Working Group prioritizes and ranks the applications, according to an iterative process that uses both quantitative and qualitative methods. For projects recommended by the Working Group to be on the prioritized list, applicants will meet with the SACOG/Caltrans Review Team to ensure the project’s scope of work, budget and timeline meet program requirements. The Working Group and SACOG/Caltrans Review Team recommendations are then provided to the SACOG executive team.

## PROJECT SCREENING

Not all projects can be easily determined for eligibility. In all cases, SACOG and Caltrans District 3 Local Assistance staff will work directly with each applicant on eligibility. For each potential application, an applicant must submit a pre-application letter describing the project, and the SACOG/Caltrans Review Team will provide a written response addressing issues relating to eligibility.

### Capacity to manage a federal-aid project

In addition, all applicants must have a staff person who is trained in federal aid funding management. In most cases, the staff is found in the Public Works Departments. Public agencies (cities, counties, and other public agencies, such as transit agencies and air quality management districts with master funding agreements with Caltrans to manage state or federal transportation funds) in Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo, and Yuba counties are the eligible applicants.

For those sponsoring jurisdictions that do not have internal staff who can manage federal transportation funds, they will be required to team up with a local agency or hire a qualified consultant in this area.

Requested project amounts fall into the following ranges: \$300,000 to \$4 million for conventional construction projects; \$150,000 to \$500,000 for conventional pre-construction (design, engineering, environmental, or right-of-way activities) projects; \$1.0 million to \$4.0 million for construction of Complete Streets projects; and \$100,000 or less for non-competitive projects. Applying

for a non-competitive project precludes the applicant from applying competitively within the Community Design Program and is limited to SACOG member agencies. Only city and counties may apply for non-competitive funding, and may only apply once per funding cycle.

### Required local match

Projects in the competitive categories of the program (above \$150,000 in funding request) must provide a minimum of 11.47% match in non-federal funds, i.e., for every \$100,000 of total project cost (grant and match combined), the program will pay up to \$88,530 for every \$11,470 of match provided by the project sponsor. Projects in the non-competitive category (funding requests of \$100,000 or less) have a 10% local match requirement.

### EVALUATING PROJECT PERFORMANCE

The Working Group prioritizes and ranks the projects, according to an iterative process that uses both quantitative and qualitative methods. There are two general evaluation criteria used by the Working Group and SACOG/Caltrans Review Team to determine whether a project will be recommended for funding. The two review committees will consider the projects based on the two criteria stated below. Additionally, in this funding cycle, an increased emphasis (new Criterion #3) will be placed on the applicant's ability to demonstrate that the land use changes claimed by the project will be reliable.

Criterion #1: How well does the proposed project promote the seven regional Blueprint Project Principles?

- transportation choices – encouraging people to walk, ride bicycles, carpool or ride the bus, light rail, or train.
- housing diversity- providing a variety of places where people can live – apartments condominiums, townhouses, and single family detached houses.
- compact development – creating environments that are more compactly built and use space in an efficient but more aesthetic manner that can encourage more walking, biking and public transit use.

- mixed land uses – building homes near or with other uses, such as business or commercial areas that create active, vital neighborhoods.
- use of existing assets – focusing development in communities with vacant land or intensifying development of underutilized land that can make better use of public infrastructure, including roads.
- natural resource protection – preserving and maintaining open spaces and natural places and agricultural lands by encouraging energy-efficient design and land use, water conservation and storm water management.
- quality design – how the built environment is developed, the relationship to the street, and how buildings are oriented, which all contribute to a community's attractiveness and how likely residents are to walk, bike or have a sense of community pride.

Criterion #2: How realistic is this project to be implemented within the program timeline?

Although these criteria have a high degree of subjectivity, the evaluation committee is comprised of peer professionals who are experienced in evaluating project performance and deliverability. SACOG staff will review the recommendations from the review committees of all three programs and take them into account for the full recommendation package sent to the board.

Criterion #3: What is the projected project performance relative to the Blueprint Principles?

An increased emphasis is placed in Round 8 on demonstrating that the proposed project will lead to indicators that promote Blueprint implementation. These include factors such as an increase in bicycle and walking modes of travel, increased residential densities, or development of lands that mix land uses. The applicant will need to demonstrate the performance of the proposed project relative to the Blueprint Principles. The applicant can draw on SACOG's project performance assessment data as part of this criterion. Projects that

received funding in prior Community Design Funding rounds have a higher threshold to demonstrate performance.

**FUNDING RECIPIENT REQUIREMENTS:**

All program fund recipients in Round 8 must expend the project funds within three years if programming funds are available in the 2018-19 fiscal year and later. If not, use of program funds is extended to match available programming capacity.

Recipients must submit a quarterly update on all projects receiving funding during the 2018 SACOG Programming Cycle. Failure to do so could result in negative impacts for future funding rounds.

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