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Request for Approval to Release the Public Draft of the Proposition 1 Cycle 4 Grant Guidelines Staff Report

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Board approve the release of a public draft of the Proposition 1 Cycle 4 Grant Guidelines.

REQUEST BACKGROUND

Staff has revised the Grant Guidelines for Cycle 4 (fiscal year 2018-2019), to update information for the upcoming grant solicitation, remove redundancies, and improve readability. Most of the changes made to the draft Guidelines involved moving information to appendices or stand-alone informational documents. The proposed changes to the Guidelines were discussed with the Program and Policy Subcommittee at their meeting on April 19. Staff has also collected feedback from applicants, grantees, and reviewers. Revisions to the document are summarized in the Table below;

If the Grant Guidelines are approved for public review by the Board, staff will:

1. Incorporate Board feedback into the current version of the draft Grant Guidelines.
2. Post the updated version of the draft Grant Guidelines for public comment on June 1, 2018.
3. Host one public meeting to solicit comment on the draft Grant Guidelines.
4. Close the public comment period on June 29, 2018.
5. Review and, amend the Grant Guidelines as appropriate based on comments received.
6. Request that the Board approve the final Grant Guidelines at the July 25, 2018 Board meeting.
7. Open the concept proposal solicitation period on August 1, 2018.

A timeline for the entire 2018-2019 grant cycle is provided at the end of this report.

The draft Grant Guidelines are included as an attachment to this report. Substantive changes are explained in red italics in the body of the document. New changes that bear discussion are noted in yellow highlight. The table below summarizes all substantive changes, the reason for making the change, and the page numbers in the draft Grant Guidelines where the changes can be found.

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Table 1: Substantive Changes Made to the Grant Guidelines

Change #	Change Made	Reason for Change	Page #
1	Moved Timeline subsection to the top of the Quick Facts section.	Makes it easy for applicants to find this information.	5
2	Removed Category 1/2 language throughout; replaced with Implementation/Planning project.	Removes confusing and infrequently used categorization.	5 and ongoing
3	Increased total funding amount to \$12.4 million.	Allows the Conservancy to award all remaining local assistance funding.	6
4	Removed dated information regarding the initial drafting of the Guidelines.	Improves readability.	7
5	Moved descriptions and examples of programmatic priorities to appendix.	Streamlines the document for easy readability without removing content.	8
6	Directly address pilot projects in the Grant Categories subsection.	Provide clear guidance to applicants regarding how to request pilot project funding.	8
7	Deleted redundant information regarding CEQA from the Grant Categories subsection.	Information already covered in Scoring Threshold and Funding Decision subsection and Environmental Compliance subsection.	8
8	Modified Grant Term definition in Grant Term subsection.	Extends useful life of project to 15 years <i>after</i> the project is implemented in order to comply with the State General Obligation Bond Law.	10
9	Deleted redundant information from the Bond Eligibility Requirements subsection.	Information already covered in Grant Program Overview section.	11
10	Moved Geographic Area of Focus subsection and changed title to Eligible Geography.	Made title more concise.	11
11	Deleted redundant information from Ineligible Projects subsection.	Information already covered in Bond Eligibility Requirements subsection.	12
12	Deleted redundant information from Ineligible Expenses subsection.	Information already covered in Grant Categories subsection.	13
13	Updated dates in Grant Cycle Important Dates subsection.	Reflects accurate information for current grant cycle.	14

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Change #	Change Made	Reason for Change	Page #
14	Created the Grant Cycle Process subsection to spell out grant cycle step-by-step and in corresponding flow chart.	Describes entire grant cycle from start to finish as clearly and concisely as possible.	14
15	Edited Application Instructions subsection to include only high-level information; all detailed information is in stand-alone application forms.	Improves readability of Grant Guidelines and prevents applicants from having to cross-reference guidelines and application form.	16
16	Combined description of concept proposal review and full proposal evaluation into Proposal Review subsection.	Reduces redundant information regarding evaluation criteria.	17
17	Slightly reworded evaluation criteria 2 and 6; added additional considerations to criterion 8(a).	Cleans up wording/formatting in criteria 2 and 6; helps to better guide assignment of points for criterion 8(a) per input from Professional Review Panel.	17
18	PROPOSED - Modify evaluation criteria: increased Program Description points available to 13 from 10; increased Budget points available to 7 from 5; decreased Local Support points available from 20 to 15.	Gives more weight to components of the application that most directly shape the grant agreement; decreases weighting for Local Support per input from Professional Review Panel.	17
19	PROPOSED - Changed scoring threshold to state that a project will not be recommended if it receives a failing score in any category save for the cost share and cost leveraging categories.	Ensures that we do not award funding to proposals that do not meet a minimum threshold for each criterion established by the Board. Avoids possibility of awarding funding to a passing project with a "fatal flaw."	20
20	Removed language in Conflict of Interest subsection that is not relevant to applicants and better described expectation of applicants.	Removes information that is irrelevant to applicants and adds direction to applicants that might have a conflict.	21
21	Revised language in California Conservation Corps subsection.	Revised for brevity and clarity.	21

Change #	Change Made	Reason for Change	Page #
22	Removed language from the Environmental Compliance subsection that is redundant with earlier sections and the full proposal application form and instructions document.	Streamlines the Grant Guidelines.	21
23	Revised Water Rights subsection to require a letter from the water rights holder to verify their willingness to participate in project; no longer requires a water rights section in the Landowner Access Agreement.	To relay only information relevant to applicants and to streamline the process for verifying water rights.	22
24	Edited the Best Available Science subsection.	Improves clarity and readability by including necessary information and references to other areas for further reading.	23
25	Revised Adaptive Management subsection.	Improves clarity and readability.	23
26	Revised Performance Monitoring and Assessment subsection to streamline language and to add requirement that applicants include a monitoring plan as a condition of the grant agreement.	Improves clarity and readability; strengthens Conservancy oversight of project monitoring in order to ensure projects achieve desired objectives and to align monitoring efforts with state protocols.	24
27	Removed information from the Long Term Management subsection that is redundant with the full application, and with the Adaptive Management subsection.	Streamlines document.	26
28	Added requirement to the Land Tenure subsection specifying that applicants provide a letter of support from the landowner of the project site if the applicant is not the landowner.	Verifies landowner's willingness to participate in project	26
29	Removed Natural Heritage Preservation Tax Credit note from the Land Acquisitions subsection.	Streamlines document.	27

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Change #	Change Made	Reason for Change	Page #
30	Turned Consultation and Cooperation with State and Local Agencies and Demonstration of Local Support into three subsections: Demonstration of Local Support, Local Notifications, and Consultation and Cooperation with State and Local Agencies.	Teases out three distinct subjects to improve clarity of document.	31
31	Added information about the agencies with which the Conservancy coordinates to the Consultation and Cooperation with State and Local Agencies.	Provides clarity.	31
31	Deleted glossary.	Terms are either common terms or already explained earlier in the document.	35
32	Added Appendix B: Programmatic Priorities.	Captures information deleted in main text.	38
33	Removed Program Requirements Checklist.	Checklist will be revised and posted as a stand-alone document on the website.	40
34	Added map of funded projects.	On the recommendation of the Program and Policy Subcommittee.	49

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