



# Memo

Date: December 16, 2019  
To: State Coastal Conservancy Board  
From: Sam Schuchat, Executive Officer  
Amy Hutzal, Deputy Executive Officer  
CC: Oversight Members  
Subject: Draft Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Guidelines

## Posting of Draft JEDI Guidelines and Public Comment Period

Attached to this memo is a Draft of the State Coastal Conservancy's JEDI Guidelines. The Conservancy is seeking comments from the public on these guidelines through March 13, 2020.

Public comments will be accepted:

- by email to [JEDI@scc.ca.gov](mailto:JEDI@scc.ca.gov);
- by mail to: JEDI Guidelines, State Coastal Conservancy, 1515 Clay Street, Suite 1000, Oakland, CA 94612;
- by phone to Amy Hutzal at (510) 286-4180; or
- by web at: <https://forms.gle/9js4fFoJoVrjcZHfA>

A webinar describing the Draft JEDI Guidelines and answering questions will be held on January 30, 2020 from 10-11:30 am. Register here:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/1466702735466855693>; Webinar ID: 157-605-059

A workshop with the Coastal Conservancy Board will be held on February 6, 2020 in Oxnard (exact location to be determined TBD), during the Conservancy's Board meeting, which is open to the public.

Staff anticipate the Coastal Conservancy Board will consider adoption of the JEDI Guidelines at either the April 2, 2020 Board Meeting in the San Francisco Bay Area (exact location TBD) or at the June 18, 2020 Board Meeting in Sacramento (exact location TBD).

## **Schedule and Process for Development of JEDI Guidelines**

Conservancy staff began the process of developing JEDI Guidelines in January of 2019. Conservancy staff established a JEDI staff committee in 2017 which has undertaken several activities to address inequities in our grantmaking, improve community engagement, increase diversity of our staff, and provide staff training on injustice and inequity. For example, our 2018-2022 Strategic Plan included environmental equity and justice as a key driver and has three objectives with numerical targets to promote equity and justice in our work. Over a dozen Conservancy staff took part in the Government Alliance on Race and Equity through 2018 and staff have participated in multiple workshops and trainings related to environmental justice and equity over the past few years. To further this work, Conservancy staff began the process of developing JEDI Guidelines.

The JEDI Guidelines are intended to provide an overarching framework for the ongoing work of Conservancy staff through a public-facing document adopted by the Conservancy board. Appendix A: State Coastal Conservancy JEDI Guidelines in Action summarizes ongoing and potential future actions that the Conservancy staff and board has undertaken or can undertake to implement the JEDI Guidelines. This list of actions will grow and evolve over time and is intended to capture the specific actions we can take to realize the broader intentions of the JEDI Guidelines.

This year has focused on soliciting input from individuals and organizations engaged in equity and environmental justice work, community-based organizing, and/or serving marginalized, under-resourced, and/or indigenous people in California, particularly those with some experience or interest in the work of the Coastal Conservancy.

- February – March, 2019: Distributed an online survey about environmental justice and the Coastal Conservancy.
- March, 2019: Discussed JEDI Guidelines process and online survey responses at Conservancy Board Meeting in Riverside.
- March- November, 2019: Reviewed comments submitted to and reports produced by Coastal Commission, State Lands Commission, San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority, San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, and Strategic Growth Council.
- July, 2019 – November, 2019: Worked with consultants to conduct five focus groups in California to seek feedback on an outline of our Draft JEDI Guidelines.
- October, 2019: Discussed JEDI Guidelines process at Conservancy Board in Eureka.
- November-December, 2019: Revised Draft JEDI Guidelines to reflect focus group feedback, survey responses, and other input received.
- December 16, 2019: Posted this memo, Draft JEDI Guidelines, and appendices on Coastal Conservancy website.

- December 19, 2019: Discuss Draft JEDI Guidelines at Conservancy Board Meeting in Santa Cruz.
- January 30, 2020, 10-11:30: Public webinar on Draft JEDI Guidelines.
- February 6, 2020: Facilitated workshop with Conservancy Board, staff, and public at Coastal Conservancy Board meeting in Oxnard.
- March 13, 2020: End of public comment period.
- March 16-27, 2020: Revise JEDI Guidelines based on comments.
- March 30, 2020: Post Final JEDI Guidelines to website.
- April 2, 2020: Possible consideration and adoption of JEDI Guidelines at Conservancy Board meeting in San Francisco Bay Area.
- OR June 18, 2020: Possible consideration and adoption of JEDI Guidelines at Conservancy Board meeting in Sacramento.
- Remainder of 2020 and ongoing: Public workshops on topics in JEDI Guidelines, focused on strategies and actions, such as:
  - Grant application and grant management barriers,
  - Criteria or questions we could add to grant applications (for example, workforce development and community engagement), and/or
  - Meaningful or mindful community engagement.

### **Feedback to Date on JEDI Guidelines**

In February and March of 2019, the Conservancy conducted an online survey that included ranking questions and open-ended questions about priorities for equity and environmental justice work. The survey was widely distributed, and 330 respondents took the survey. The results of the survey are attached as Appendix C.

In the summer of 2019, the Conservancy contracted five environmental justice and/or community-based planning experts to collaboratively plan and facilitate focus groups with organizations engaged in equity and environmental justice, community-based organizing, and/or serving marginalized, under-resourced, and/or indigenous people, and with some connection to or interest in the work of the Conservancy. The focus group consultants, locations, and dates were as follows:

- Estolano Advisors: San Diego focus group on October 9, 2019.
- Better World Group: Los Angeles focus group on October 16, 2019.
- Nahal Ghoghaie Ipakchi: San Francisco Bay Area focus group on October 16, 2019.
- José González: Focus group with statewide parks equity organizations (held in Sacramento) on October 17, 2019.

- Mari Rose Taruc: Focus group with statewide environmental justice organizations (held by webinar) on November 15, 2019.

The focus group facilitators provided reports summarizing key feedback and recommendations. These reports are attached as Appendix B. We encourage you to read these reports, as they include quotes from focus group participants, summaries of major themes, and specific recommendations for the Conservancy. The Conservancy staff appreciates the work by the five consultants and thanks the participants in the five focus groups. The participants are listed in Attachment 1 to Appendix B.

In the summer of 2019, the Conservancy notified all 161 tribes within our jurisdiction of the intent to develop JEDI Guidelines, offering to meet with tribal representatives in-person or via phone in order to build relationships and mutual understanding, including how the Conservancy can better serve tribes within its jurisdiction. Conservancy staff met one-on-one with representatives from two tribes and four indigenous-serving non-profits, and is continuing to reach out individually to tribes to build relationships and solicit feedback on the JEDI Guidelines.

Conservancy staff endeavored to address the issues and themes brought up in the online survey, focus groups, and meetings. Some of the themes, such as the importance of diversity of and commitment by staff and board, increasing support for and partnerships with community-based organizations, addressing barriers to grant funding, addressing barriers to coastal access, and working with California's tribes, have been reflected in the Draft JEDI guidelines. Comments about specific terminology, the meaning of terms, and jargon used in the guidelines were addressed with revisions to the language and the addition of a list of definitions to the guidelines. Specific recommendations for addressing barriers to funding, expanding funding for community engagement, and building staff capacity for equity work are included in Appendix A, which summarizes actions the Conservancy has or will undertake to implement the JEDI Guidelines.

Some of the comments reflect the fact that there are significant issues facing under-resourced and marginalized communities in California, including a lack of affordable housing, homelessness, housing and food insecurity, inadequate transportation options, and significant barriers to employment opportunities that provide a living income. Within the work that the Conservancy does conduct to improve public access, protect and restore habitats, and adapt to climate change, we should strive to play a role in addressing these broader inequities and injustices and take these societal issues into account when developing programs and funding projects.

### **Some Broad Feedback Themes**

Appendices B and C provide more details about the feedback received through the online survey and focus groups. The Conservancy hosted a Coro Fellow, Katherine Stubbs, in November and December of 2019, who reviewed the survey, the focus group reports, and

comments submitted to and reports produced by Coastal Commission, State Lands Commission, San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority, and San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission to help us identify key input relevant to the draft JEDI Guidelines. Conservancy staff endeavored to incorporate all of this feedback into the Draft JEDI Guidelines and supporting material, and have outlined some broad themes, primarily from the focus groups, below.

### Relevancy of State Coastal Conservancy

Many community members and community-based organizations may be deterred from interacting with the Conservancy because they perceive the agency's work as not being relevant to them and their grassroots work. Not all communities have access to nor interact with the coast equally, for a multitude of reasons and obstacles. Thus, it is paramount that the Conservancy better understand the people and communities we are trying to serve and make explicit the connections of our work to people's lives in ways that are relevant.

Direct quotes from the focus groups related to relevancy included:

"On outreach, it's notable that many of us haven't heard of SCC & the funding. Environmental awareness is integrated into culture. It would be beneficial to look at funding groups who aren't overtly environmental groups; look into community & cultural groups to fund & invest in reaching out to these groups (that SCC hasn't touched). The name Coastal Conservancy definition sounds limiting; because watersheds are more accessible, and Bay; redefine 'coastal'." (Statewide Environmental Justice Focus Group)

"Don't talk to people about future disasters, talk to people about what they're living through and dealing with right now." (Bay Area Focus Group)

"Changing the model of what's the right way to access nature, figuring out the kinds of facilities people want to see, whether the facilities cater to the kinds of things communities of color would like to do." (Parks Equity Focus Group)

"In order to foster a sense of awareness and perceptions of relevance for any audience, program staff must do a better job of understanding their audiences." (Final Recommendations for the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority: *Establishing an Equity and Community Engagement Program that Benefits Economically Disadvantaged Communities*)

### Investing in Community Engagement and Community-Based Organizations

Across the focus groups and online survey was a clear message about the need to build long-term relationships and trust with communities and with community-based organizations, to avoid parachuting into communities, to share power and decision-making, and to invest funding in this work and in the people and organizations providing expertise.

The Los Angeles Focus Group Report included this statement:

“There was broad agreement that comprehensive community engagement involves being intentional about engaging community residents in decision-making and really understanding their issues. Government agencies are seen as not prioritizing the time, energy and skill community organizations invest in building trust within their communities.”

The Bay Area Focus Group Report included this statement:

“True community engagement is not fully funded the way it should be. The true cost of community engagement is far from being adequately recognized... [a] participant mentioned that outreach-related billing rates are significantly lower than engineering rates for example. They further explained that, ‘Funds need to recognize the lack of trust between communities and agencies, and the fact that much time and energy needs to go into restorative justice, mediation, and if needed development of partnering agreements.’ They went on to state that, ‘Communities are also spending a lot of their unpaid time educating agencies on how to effectively engage their residents.’”

The Parks Equity Focus Group included this direct quote:

“...often there are partnerships where there is a large organization that needs a smaller org to get the grant, then pays the smaller org at a lower rate than they pay their staff, or even worse, doesn’t pay them for this work, but expects the smaller org to do it for free. Lot of grassroots orgs will go along with it because we’re strapped for resources or partnerships with important people.”

From the Parks Equity Focus Group came the following key takeaways:

- “1. This takes Emotional Labor and should be recognized and compensated as such, especially if it’s key to grant funding.
2. Evaluate how to support and fund Community Engagement as frontloaded process to funding so that it leads to authentic outcomes rather than trying to fit community engagement to predetermined outcomes.
3. There is a need and opportunity to provide community-based organizations with professional development that increases their impact.”

### Equity of Grant Programs

Three of the key findings from the Bay Area Focus Group were specifically about our grant funding programs:

- “Quantitative indicators and methods make it difficult to fully understand the expertise of the applicant, as well as their often more holistic, qualitative, yet very effective methods. Government staff and individuals tasked with scoring proposals should take the time to meet with applicants and learn about their community engagement methods and their indicators of success.

- “Grant scoring criteria needs to be more holistic and should explicitly include and encourage projects that enhance shoreline and watershed stewardship through non-traditional methods, such as arts, culture and more creative means. Frontline communities are less interested in and connected to the typical SCC-funded types of projects, such as habitat tours, beach cleanups, etc.
- “The grant application language that strictly emphasizes the shoreline or watershed-based location of the project should be amended to be more inclusive of projects that are relevant to frontline communities. Projects that take place closer to where these communities reside can still be effective at helping residents recognize how their at-home behaviors can impact shoreline and watershed habitat health.”

The recommendations from the Los Angeles Focus Group Report related to grantmaking were similar in nature:

- “Modify grant program guidelines to support and prioritize efforts to reduce environmental burden in overburdened communities.
- Invest in building the capacity of smaller community-based organizations and non-profits working. Reduce onerous requirements in grant applications that may dissuade organizations from applying for funding.
- Develop scoring criteria for grant proposals that takes into account meaningful community engagement.
- Collect and analyze data on types of organizations, geographies and programs where Coastal Conservancy has made investments to identify potential gaps.”

From the San Diego Focus Group:

“A participant who unsuccessfully applied for a grant surfaced several issues with the application process. As a small nonprofit, they stressed that the Conservancy should ‘acknowledge everyone’s needs may not be the same.’ They suggested for individualized technical assistance and more flexible guidelines. Others shared their frustrations navigating the agency’s funding restrictions, which often limit expenditures to ‘bus trips and gas’ and activities that take place on the coast.”

Key takeaways from the Parks Equity Focus Group in Sacramento addressed similar issues faced by community-based organizations seeking state grants:

“1. Keep flexibility in terms of scope for a grant, so if at some point throughout the project a new need arises and there is a need to pivot, there is some flexibility from the funder.

2. Community based organizations often know best in terms of access and equity issues but their expertise may not be valued as such.
3. Applicants are wary of having to put together applications repeatedly for different requests since they are labor intensive.
4. Organizations and communities are wary of 'equity funding' going to bigger organizations and perpetuating inequitable funding practices."

### Representation

For the Conservancy to be relevant, to meaningfully engage communities, and to endeavor to incorporate equity in our grant programs, we need to represent California's diverse populations, increase capacity and cultural humility of staff, and elevate the voices of people from the communities we are seeking to serve.

Below are two summary statements from the Statewide Environmental Justice Focus Group as well as a specific quote on the topic of representation:

"Focus group participants want to see improved engagement & representation of indigenous people, especially in educational and storytelling roles about the coast and their ancestral practices."

"Elevate & normalize indigenous people and other POC to be the face of coastal stories instead of white SCC staff or other environmentalists as the experts."

"When I think of coastal programs and who lead them, it's not great that white government folks are leading them or are the face of experts. We need to give room for indigenous and other POC to be the face of these coastal stories. SCC can do better partnerships with communities of color & pay for local expertise. SCC needs to be aware of power dynamics with communities of color. We acknowledge that this can be awkward because we are talking about systems of oppression, capitalism, institutional racism & classism; acknowledge these."

The San Diego Focus Group Report noted that diversity alone does not equal inclusion:

"Participants discussed the benefits of having a diverse staff but stressed that diversity alone does not guarantee inclusion. As one participant noted, agencies should be 'very cognizant about not tokenizing people into positions. Forced diversity is not necessarily inclusion of voice.' Others agreed and advocated for reforms in the Conservancy's employment process... Participants were in strong agreement that the Conservancy should make concerted efforts to diversify staff in a way that advances inclusion at all levels of management."

A summary statement from the Los Angeles Focus Group, which was echoed in the San Diego Focus Group Report, relates to our geographic representation:

"The Conservancy, headquartered in Oakland, CA, has concentrated staff in the Bay Area and very limited presence in Southern California. Relatedly, the Board is primarily comprised of representatives from northern California. Participants

expressed concern that the majority of the Conservancy’s staff and the Board have decision making and funding power over a region where knowledge gaps in community needs and engagement may be significant.”

Two quotes from the online survey on the topic of diversity and staff capacity reflect feedback from multiple sources:

“I think it is important to keep striving for staff, board members, and contractors to reflect the diversity of California, however, I think that may take time and in the meantime, it is important that those people in those positions now understand the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion as well as interact with communities with cultural competency.”

“If the Conservancy is to truly embark upon this work, its internal staff and culture needs to be one of equity, diversity, respect, and compassion. If you cannot achieve this internally, how can you hope to change the state at large? Equity work doesn't mean anything when the internal members of the Conservancy do not choose to do the internal work associated with equity work.”

### Accountability

Finally, it is critical that the JEDI Guidelines are more than a statement and are woven into the work of the Conservancy and that we are held accountable for actual actions and outcomes.

From the Environmental Justice Organizations Focus Group came the following quote:

“Once your EJ statement is complete, I would add that to the criteria: how does your project uphold our statement and commitment to EJ? So, it's not a statement that doesn't do anything. Then you need someone with content experience to vet the answer, as opposed to people who might think it sounds good, but don't know how to measure it accurately.”

The following statement from the Parks Equity Focus group calls for outcomes, transparency, and accountability:

“Participants will be looking to see what comes of this, what is the follow up, and ultimately how this changes practices that reach back to the communities they work with. There is an excitement that Equity is now more common of a term, but there is still concern that its meaningful and impactful action is lost in trendiness that will not result in actual outcomes.”