

## **Eligibility Criteria**

Staff proposes separating criteria into eligibility criteria and selection criteria. Every Conservancy project would be required to meet all applicable eligibility criteria.

- Consistent with purposes of the funding source.
- Consistent with Conservancy enabling legislation: Public Resources Code, Division 21.
- California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Compliance – The Conservancy must consider how CEQA applies to each funding decision. Unless an exemption applies to the project or to the work being funded, the required CEQA documentation must be complete before the Conservancy authorizes a grant. CEQA documentation does not have to be complete to apply for a grant.
- Grantee capacity – The grantee has the ability to administer the funds and conduct the project in a manner that will meet the State’s requirements and will protect the grantee from potential financial or legal risk. If the grantee does not have the capacity, they have partnered with a fiscal sponsor that will provide them the needed administrative support.
- Site ownership/control – The grantee has or will have the legal right to carry out the project on the land on which the project is proposed.
- Long-term management – The grantee has a plan for the long-term management, maintenance, and monitoring of the project.

## **Proposed Selection Criteria**

Selection criteria will be used to prioritize projects for Conservancy funding. Given the broad range of project types funded by the Conservancy, not all criteria will be applicable to every project. For example, land acquisition projects may have more limited opportunities for early engagement given the sensitive nature of some purchase negotiations. However, the Conservancy would expect grant applicants to incorporate the themes of the criteria wherever feasible.

Some of the proposed criteria implement the Conservancy’s JEDI Guidelines, including two new criteria related to meaningful community engagement and tribal engagement. Different project types will be expected to have different levels of community engagement. Development of a new park would benefit from meaningful, extensive community input; replacement of a remote fish passage barrier may not. Tribal engagement is also expected to vary with different types of projects. However, all Conservancy projects are on former tribal lands and early effort should be made to try to engage tribes. Separate from the update of the selection criteria, the Conservancy is also examining its funding programs to support engagement to the maximum extent possible given the funding sources the Conservancy administers.

The Conservancy has long supported multi-benefit projects, but the criteria have been revised to describe both natural resource benefits and community benefits. With this, staff have tried to provide more concrete examples of how our projects could benefit communities, such as:

improving public health, addressing the need for additional recreational amenities, reducing pollution burden, creating jobs, training for jobs, developing workforces, and supporting increased civic engagement.

Additionally, staff is recommending changing the climate change related criteria. Currently our required criteria reference a 2013 Executive Order related to sea level rise. In the proposed new criteria staff have broadened the criteria to ensure that project benefits are sustainable or resilient over the project lifetime. Sea level rise projections continue to increase and this framing allows staff to apply appropriate, current projections based on a project's expected lifespan. The language is broad to encompass all relevant, projected climate impacts. In addition, staff added language to prioritize projects that support rather than impede long-term climate adaptation.

Some of the examples below refer to underserved or frontline communities. As defined in the Conservancy's JEDI Guidelines, these include communities that are economically disadvantaged; historically underrepresented in the environmental policymaking and/or projects; carrying disproportionate environmental and health burdens; vulnerable to climate change impacts due to lack of resources required for community resilience; or severely burdened by housing costs and increased risk of displacement.

The selection criteria are broad concepts and there are different ways of meeting the criteria. Below are the draft criteria in bold, with bullets underneath describing various ways a project could meet the criteria.

**1. Extent to which the project helps the Conservancy accomplish the objectives in the Strategic Plan.**

- Develop the California Coastal Trail as a major recreational amenity, tourist attraction, and alternative transportation system.
- Expand the system of coastal public accessways, open-space areas, parks, and inland trails that connect to the coast.
- Revitalize coastal and inland waterfronts that provide significant public benefits and promote sustainable economic development.
- Expand environmental education efforts to improve public understanding, use, and stewardship of coastal resources.
- Protect significant coastal resource properties, including farmland, rangeland, and forests.
- Enhance biological diversity, improve water quality, habitat, and other natural resources within coastal watersheds.
- Enhance coastal working lands, including farmland, rangeland, and forests.
- Enhance the resiliency of coastal communities and ecosystems to the impacts of climate change.
- Improve public access, recreation, and educational facilities and programs within the Santa Ana River Parkway.

- Protect and enhance natural habitats and connecting corridors, watersheds, scenic areas, and other open-space resources of regional importance in the Santa Ana River watershed.
- Identify and prioritize long-term resource and recreational goals for the San Francisco Bay Area.
- Protect and enhance natural habitats and connecting corridors, watersheds, scenic areas, and other open-space resources of regional importance in the Bay Area.
- Improve public access, recreation, and educational facilities and programs in and around San Francisco Bay, along the coast, the ridgelines, in urban open spaces, and natural areas.
- Protect Bay Area working lands and support farmers and ranchers in implementing stewardship of the natural resources on their lands.

**2. Project is a good investment of state resources.**

- Project provides important benefits to Californians.
- Project is feasible.
- Budget is reasonable.
- Project leverages non state resources including volunteer work, in-kind support, or partnerships.
- Project advances statewide goals and is consistent with regional plans.
- Protects or enhances significant resources.
- Pilot projects that may have demonstration value.
- Applicant has consulted with relevant State and Federal agencies.
- Scientific assumptions of project are explained in proposal, project follows best practices.

**3. Project benefits will be sustainable or resilient over the project lifespan.**

- Project will continue to deliver benefits over reasonable time period.
- Demonstrate resilience to sea level rise or other climate change impacts.
- Project will not make future climate adaptation more difficult. For example, restoring a wetland will provide benefits in the near term and may allow for other future adaptation actions.
- Applicant for planning project has identified potential implementation funding and has a strategy for obtaining necessary approvals.
- See #6 for sustainability/resilience related to tribes.

**4. Project delivers multiple benefits and significant positive impact.**

- Projects provides co-benefits and alleviates multiple stressors within communities, such as improving public health, addressing the need for additional recreational amenities, reductions in pollution burden, improved flood protection, habitat enhancement or other environmental benefits.
- Programs and projects increase equity and environmental justice by benefitting underserved and/or frontline communities.
- Project increases community-preparedness or resilience to future climate change

impacts such as drought resilience.

- Project increases carbon sequestration.
- Project provides benefits to the community, such as: job training, job creation, workforce development, support for increased civic engagement, leadership development opportunities, funding for education, and volunteer opportunities.
- Urban parks, urban trails, education centers, and waterfront revitalization projects include consideration of anti-displacement strategies where appropriate.
- See #6 for examples of multiple benefits and significant positive impact for tribes.

**5. Project was (or will be) planned with meaningful community engagement and broad community support.**

- Engage with communities in public co-visioning processes before projects are developed to reflect community needs. Project concepts that are anchored in community priorities and expertise.
- Communities engaged in meaningful way to build mutual trust and relationships. Examples could include: 1) process involves staff, board members, or consultants who have worked in or are from respective community or 2) process includes dialogue between all affected and necessary parties, or direct involvement of local community groups.
- Engagement process addresses unequal power dynamics between communities and government, historic inequity, injustices, and trauma. Communities have a decision-making role in the development of the project.
- Community is represented on applicant's staff, board, within the project's planning group, or project is partnering with local community based organizations.
- Engagement process makes it easy for community members to participate by, for example, providing stipends, meeting in convenient locations, using virtual venues, providing childcare and food.
- Project team has a track record working within communities and incorporating insights gained from community engagement into project planning.
- Materials developed during or as a result of the project are made available in multiple languages that are representative of the languages spoken in the engaged community.
- See #6 for meaningful community engagement with tribes.

**6. Programs and projects implement tribal engagement wherever possible.**

- Applicant has made an effort to communicate with tribes as early as possible in project development.
- Project includes working with tribes to enable traditional stewardship and cultural practices on ancestral land and co-management of their ancestral lands and natural resources; or projects assist tribes to regain access to their ancestral lands on the coast.
- Project includes indigenous voices, leadership, and perspectives, including traditional ecological knowledge, indigenous stewardship, and educational programs.
- Tribal concerns are respected and archaeological and cultural resources are protected.
- Signage, communications, and other project information includes tribal land acknowledgement and accurate historical information.

