

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
December 2, 2021

CLIMATE RESILIENT SCHOOLS INITIATIVE

Project No. 21-068-01
Project Manager: Moira McEnespy

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$120,000 to Mycelium Youth Network to identify and plan up to four priority climate adaptation projects to be implemented at Metwest High School.

LOCATION: Metwest High School, Oakland, Alameda County (see Exhibit 1)

EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)
Exhibit 2: [Letter of Commitment from Metwest High School](#)
Exhibit 3: [OUSD Board Policy on Living Schoolyards](#)
Exhibit 4: [Letters of Support](#)
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RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution and findings.

Resolution:

The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes a grant of an amount not to exceed one hundred twenty thousand dollars (\$120,000) to Mycelium Youth Network (“the grantee”) to identify and plan up to four priority climate adaptation projects to be implemented at Metwest High School in Oakland, Alameda County.

Prior to commencement of the project, the grantee shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy (“Executive Officer”) the following:

1. A detailed work program, schedule, and budget, including provisions for acknowledging Conservancy funding.
2. Names and qualifications of any contractors to be retained in carrying out the project.

Findings:

Based on the accompanying staff recommendation and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed authorization is consistent with Chapter 3 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding the Climate Ready Program.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.
3. Mycelium Youth Network is a nonprofit organization organized under section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize a grant of an amount not to exceed one hundred twenty thousand dollars (\$120,000) to Mycelium Youth Network (“MYN”) to conduct a youth-led community process that will identify and plan up to four priority climate adaptation projects that can be implemented in the 2022/23 school year at Metwest High School (City of Oakland, Alameda County; see Exhibit 1). The projects will provide benefits and services—such as replacing heat-trapping surfaces with green spaces, sequestering carbon, capturing and naturally filtering water, increasing local food availability—that will improve the community’s ability to withstand the impacts of climate change.

Metwest has confirmed its commitment to work with MYN to implement the actions developed during this planning process (see Exhibit 2), and MYN will continue to work with its established foundation partners and apply for additional external grants (including the Conservancy) to support the implementation.

The project will be carried out in coordination with the Oakland Unified School District (“OUSD”) and consistent with the OUSD Living Schoolyards policy (see Exhibit 3). In particular, the project is consistent with the goal that schoolyards strengthen environmental resilience by contributing to the ecological health of their neighborhoods. By delivering documentation of the planning process, the tools developed to map community needs, and a community needs assessment report, the project will provide a model and replicable process that the grantee will use to reach out to other OUSD school sites. Schools are strategic locations for building community resilience because they are in every neighborhood, and can thus contribute to an eventual collective district-wide network of benefits.

The recommended project will engage both the school and neighborhood community. Approximately seven youth will form a Youth Leadership Council that will outreach to and survey at least 100 to 150 of their peers, and at least 50 community members. Conservancy funds will help support all aspects of this approximately year-long process in which youth will conduct the following components:

- **Community Needs Assessment:** Meet with local climate experts and regional agencies to explore several topic areas of climate resilience: Electricity, food security, water, and air quality, each of which corresponds to grantee-led curriculum modules (Science for Survival; Growing Our Health: Food, Soil, and Carbon Drawdown; Water is Life; and Clean Air is a Right).

Conduct interviews of family, community members; engage in online and other issues research, including reading US Climate Assessment data; use existing toolkits such as from NOAA; identify community assets.

Work with the climate and agency experts on ways to address the specific issues that the community identifies (for examples, commercial air pollution in homes, “heat-island” effects in Oakland’s East Lake neighborhood, smoke from forest fires).

- **Community Organizing:** Develop viable solutions and present them to the larger community for feedback.
- **Solutions Development and Project Planning:** Plan up to four specific projects that will help implement solutions to the identified challenges and that consider air, water, soil, or energy, with a focus on turning their school into a space that helps build climate resilience not just for the school community but for the neighborhood as well.

Possible solutions may include projects such as tree plantings or building vertical gardens; or if water scarcity is an issue, youth will assess their neighborhood’s likelihood for drought, and then seek to build out full-scale water catchment and purification systems aligned with the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Solutions will be aligned with the City of Oakland’s Equitable Climate Action Plan.

Solutions will be developed in coordination with other OUSD sustainability efforts and partners (e.g., the “Sustainability Advisory Council,” and Y-PLAN (“Youth - Plan, Learn, Act Now,” an initiative with UC Berkeley’s Center for Cities and Schools).

- **Civic Participation:** Present their environmental issue of concern, findings, and solutions to their city council members.

Frontline communities experience the consequences of climate change “first and worst,” but are not engaged in planning processes to find solutions. Today’s youth are inheriting a heavy responsibility to live with and address climate change. There is particular need for young people, especially predominantly low-income Black and Brown youth in the San Francisco Bay Area -- who are most vulnerable to and already feeling the effects of environmental racism -- to proactively respond to and lead solutions to climate change. In addition, the potential for the vast network of schoolyards across cities throughout the nation to become part of a green infrastructure network is largely untapped.

Site Description: The recommended project will engage youth at Metwest High School in Oakland’s Eastlake neighborhood, with whom the grantee already partners to provide “Climate Resilient Schools” programming in the classroom. More than 88% of the student population at Metwest High School identifies as either Latinx, African-American, or Asian; more than 85%

come from economically-disadvantaged households; and 76% qualify either for free or reduced lunch. The overwhelming majority of students live in neighborhoods disproportionately affected by environmental issues, and the campus is located in an area directly adjacent to disadvantaged communities as defined by Proposition 68. Metwest High School has provided a letter expressing its commitment to working with the grantee to conduct the project (see Exhibit 3).

Grant Applicant Qualifications: MYN is a pioneering San Francisco Bay Area youth-centered organization founded in 2017 to equip youth with the resources, training, and knowledge from the ground up that they will need to survive and thrive in a climate-challenged world. MYN has intentionally grown its leadership and staffing to represent challenged communities: 100% of its staff are people of color, live within walking distance of the majority of MYN programming, and are experienced educators, community organizers, and climate resilience experts. Its Climate Resilient Schools Initiative programs are nationally-recognized, and MYN has run the programming both in-person and virtually. The proposed project will retain additional expertise, such as with Dr. Pablo Cornejo, a civil engineer who may (for example, depending on the specific community-driven issues) advise on a teachable model for water catchment and purification (see Exhibit 4).

Time is budgeted for contracts and financial specialists to manage and track project funding and reporting; for a Program and Operations Manager to specifically coordinate campus logistics; and for the Executive Director/Founder, Educational Director, and advisors to lead project content and implementation.

MYN will identify specific evaluation outcomes and provide summaries.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA:

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines, last updated on September 23, 2021, in the following respects:

Selection Criteria

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

See the "Consistency with Conservancy's Strategic Plan" section below.

2. Project is a good investment of state resources.

Youth are inheriting the responsibility to live with and address climate change, particularly youth from frontline communities that experience the consequences "first and worst." The recommended project will create a scalable and replicable model for urban youth to address this legacy. Participating youth will learn about the environmental issues affecting their area, and work within their communities to normalize leading the execution of actions that directly address those issues. The recommended project is feasible; leverages private and public funds; and strengthens partnerships with community organizations, public agencies, climate specialists, and academia (see Exhibit 4). It will also further the following

climate justice goals contained in the state’s climate adaptation strategy (*Safeguarding California Plan: 2018 Update*): “Actively engage, educate, and partner with communities to enable early, continuous, and meaningful participation in adaptation initiatives” and “Identify the most vulnerable communities to climate change to prioritize initiatives and build grassroots capacity.” The recommended project therefore provides important benefits to Californians and is a good investment of state resources.

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

The recommended project will identify and plan up to four priority climate adaptation projects to be implemented at Metwest High School consistent with OUSD’s Living Schoolyards policy, thereby setting up on-the-ground projects with lasting benefits. Metwest has confirmed its commitment to work with MYN to implement the actions developed during this planning process (see Exhibit 2), and MYN will continue to work with its established foundation partners and apply for additional external grants to support the implementation.

4. Project delivers multiple benefits and significant positive impact.

The recommended project will increase equity and environmental justice by benefitting underserved and/or frontline communities; increase community-preparedness or resilience to future climate change impacts under the themes of electricity, food security, water, and air quality by developing up to four priority implementable on-the-ground projects; and facilitate youth taking a proactive leadership role in developing and eventually implementing solutions in their school and community via a process that increases their civic engagement and leadership development.

5. Project planned with meaningful community engagement and broad community support.

The heart of the recommended project is a youth-led community process that will identify and plan up to four priority climate adaptation projects; see the “Project Summary” and “Grant Applicant Qualifications” section above.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$120,000
Manzanita Foundation	\$10,000
Mycelium Youth Network	\$10,000
Seed Foundation	\$5,000
Bay Area Air Quality Management District (applied for)	\$15,000
Other Contributions - Events, Individuals (pending)	\$21,000
Project Total	\$181,000

Conservancy funds are anticipated to come from a FY2018/19 appropriation to the Conservancy from the “California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018” (Prop 68, Public Resources Code Division 45, Chapters 1-13, Sections 80000-80173). In particular, Chapter 10 of Prop 68 allocates funds to the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program for projects to improve a community’s ability to adapt to the unavoidable impacts of climate change; improve and protect coastal and rural economies, agricultural viability, wildlife corridors, or habitat; develop future recreational opportunities; or enhance drought tolerance, landscape resilience, and water retention. (Pub. Res. Code sections 80130 and 80133(b)). In addition, Section 80008(a)(2) states that at least 15 percent of the available funds shall be allocated for projects serving severely disadvantaged communities. Finally, Section 80008(b)(1) states that up to 10 percent of these available funds may be allocated for technical assistance to disadvantaged communities. The Climate Ready RFP defines technical assistance as “project development” activities that will help identify specific solutions and projects, i.e., the process of providing necessary education and resources for project scoping and development and project implementation assistance.

The recommended project is within the San Francisco Bay Area Program and will be undertaken pursuant to the Climate Ready Program established in Chapter 3 of the Conservancy’s enabling legislation. Consistent with Chapter 10 of Proposition 68, the recommended project seeks to improve a community’s ability to adapt to the unavoidable impacts of climate change, specifically by planning community-supported projects that will address the impacts of climate change. The project will be sited at Metwest High School, which is located adjacent to “disadvantaged communities” (“DACs”) and within one mile of “severely disadvantaged communities” (“SDACS”) as defined by Proposition 68; furthermore the project will provide direct benefits to both these DAC and SDAC communities. Consistent with Section 80008(a)(2), funds for the recommended project may count towards the 15 percent SDAC requirement. The Conservancy is tracking its SDAC allocations. Consistent with Section 80008(b)(1), the recommended project will identify and plan up to four specific priority climate adaptation projects. The recommended project is therefore consistent with the intended funding source.

Other funds are anticipated to come from private foundations and donors, other agency grant programs, and Metwest High School (at which the project will take place). Unless specifically labelled “Required Match” the other sources of funding listed above are provided as estimates. The Coastal Conservancy does not typically require matching funds nor does it require documentation of expenditures from other funders. Typical grant conditions require grantees to provide any funds needed to complete the project.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

Section 31113 of Chapter 3 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code authorizes the Conservancy to address the impacts and potential impacts of climate change on resources within the Conservancy’s jurisdiction (Section 31113(a)). The recommended project will address resources within the Conservancy’s jurisdiction because it will be undertaken within one of the nine counties of the San Francisco Bay Area (Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code).

Section 31113(b) authorizes the Conservancy to award grants to nonprofit organizations and public agencies to undertake projects that include reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and addressing extreme weather events, sea level rise, flooding, and other coastal hazards that threaten coastal communities, infrastructure, and natural resources. Consistent with this section, the recommended project will provide a grant to a nonprofit organization to develop specific youth- and community-identified priority actions to improve the community's ability to address these unavoidable impacts of climate change.

Section 31113(c) states that the Conservancy must prioritize grants for projects that maximize public benefits and have one of several purposes, including reducing emissions of greenhouse gases, preserving and enhancing natural lands, conserving biodiversity, and providing recreational opportunities. Consistent with this section, the recommended project maximizes public benefits (see the "Consistency with Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria" section above) and seeks to develop specific actions consistent with these purposes.

Section 31113(d) states that when allocating funds made available pursuant to Chapter 10 of Proposition 68 the Conservancy shall prioritize projects that (A) use natural infrastructure, (B) provide multiple public benefits, and (C) give consideration to projects in a variety of ecosystems. Consistent with this section, the recommended project will factor in these criteria when identifying, through the community needs assessment, and planning the specific climate adaptation projects, which are expected to be multi-benefit and based on natural infrastructure.

Section 31113(d)(2) requires that the Conservancy provide information to the Office of Planning and Research (OPR) on any projects funded pursuant to this subdivision. Consistent with this section, the Conservancy will provide relevant information to OPR.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S [2018-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN](#) GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):

Consistent with **Goal 8, Objective B** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will plan and design adaptation projects to increase resilience to climate change impacts.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

The recommended project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, Section 15306 because it involves information collection and resource evaluation for possible future action, and there will be no disturbance to an environmental resource.

The project is also statutorily exempt from CEQA pursuant to Cal. Code. Regs. Tit. 14 section 15262 (Feasibility and Planning Studies). It consists of planning studies and will consider environmental factors that will increase schools' climate resilience, but does not bind the agency to future action and does not require preparation of an Environmental Impact Report or Negative Declaration.

Upon approval of the project, Conservancy staff will file a Notice of Exemption.