

ATTACHMENT 1

Matching Grant Program Updates 2009 – Present

Since its inception, the MGP has constantly evolved to meet the needs of the community. Following each funding cycle, Ag + Open Space seeks input to identify ways to enhance and improve the Program. All Program improvements to date have come from stakeholder input, our Board, Advisory Committee, Fiscal Oversight Commission, applicants, staff, community members, peer organizations, and other project partners. Over the last several years, there have been significant updates and refinements to the Program to create a more community-responsive, transparent, and efficient process.

In 2009, the Ag + Open Space Board of Directors adopted a number of revisions to the MGP Guidelines, including:

- The funding match should be no less than a one-to-one ratio.
- No more than 50 percent of the MGP funding match can be associated with operations and maintenance of the project.
- Limiting impervious surfaces for development projects.
- Restricting grant funding for intensive recreational improvements, such as pools and playground equipment.
- Acquisition projects must be purchased within two years of the initial Board of Directors' recommendation of the project.

In 2011, the Board approved another update of the MGP. This update reflected improvements to the Guidelines, including:

- Administrative requirements such as offering the MGP biennially.
- Revising time limits on the completion of projects to three years for acquisition projects and five years for restoration or development projects from the date the Board of Directors accepts projects into the program.
- Updated project evaluation criteria to provide applicants with a better understanding of how projects are considered.

Following the 2016 and 2018 Program cycles, staff and the Subcommittees found that additional refinements to the Program were necessary to provide better clarity to applicants and improve transparency in the evaluation process. Several themes were analyzed for potential updates. These included but were not limited to: Program frequency; Program funding; eligibility of grant funding for capital replacement; match requirements; and subcommittee recusal.

In 2019, the Board approved another update of the MGP. This update included improvements to the Guidelines to clarify and formalize evaluation standards to improve transparency, including:

- Increased funding for the 2020 MGP cycle from \$2 million to \$4 million.
- Adjusted the scoring matrix to include criteria that focused on the intent of the MGP:
 - Protection of new or expanded open space. Projects that feature the purchase of new open space land are a priority of the MGP.
 - Linking communities to open space via trails or other connections.
 - Protection or creation of public access to the Russian River, Pacific Ocean, or other waterways.
 - Implementation of restoration or enhancement of natural and native habitats.

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- Protection of native plant and/or animal species.
- Construction of an outdoor public community gathering space in a natural setting.
- Development of new, outdoor, nature-based, recreational opportunities.
- Construction of amenities to provide opportunities for public education about the natural world and/or local agriculture.
- Protection of farmland that provides urban greenspace and access to locally grown food and fiber and provide opportunities for the public to experience farming and agricultural production.
- Provided improved clarity on minimum qualifications for all applications, as well as detailed information on evaluation criteria.
- Clarified which types of projects are ineligible for funding:
 - Projects that replace existing facilities or amenities with facilities or amenities that have the same function or purpose. Prior guidelines stated projects that “rehabilitate existing facilities” were ineligible.
 - Projects that would implement tasks that are required as a condition of approval or mitigation for an unrelated development project.
- Increased the match allowed for project administration and planning from 10% to 25%.
- Prioritized projects in fire- and/or flood-affected areas.
- Removed the 1:1 match requirement, but stated that projects with more match would be more competitive.