



SUMMARY REPORT

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**Agenda Date:** 5/14/2024

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**To:** Board of Directors of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District  
**Department or Agency Name(s):** Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District  
**Staff Name and Phone Number:** Amy Ricard, 565-7261  
**Vote Requirement:** Majority  
**Supervisorial District(s):** Countywide

**Title:**

Community Spaces Matching Grant Program Technical Assistance Agreements

**Recommended Action:**

Authorize the General Manager to execute three service agreements for technical assistance to be provided to applicants of the Community Spaces Matching Grant Program totaling \$110,000 effective for three years ending on May 14, 2027, as follows:

1. An agreement with Carlile Macy, Inc. in an amount not-to-exceed \$50,000.
2. An agreement with Green Impact, a sole proprietor, in an amount not-to-exceed \$30,000.
3. An agreement with Complete Grant Solutions, LLC, in an amount not-to-exceed \$30,000.

**Executive Summary:**

Since 1990, the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District has offered a competitive Matching Grant Program to public agencies and nonprofit organizations for open space projects within and near Sonoma County's cities and communities. On March 5, 2024, the Board of Directors approved a pilot rolling application program model, along with updated program guidelines, a revised scoring matrix, and a more accessible and supportive application process. With an ongoing commitment to increase equity and accessibility, the Board directed staff to provide technical assistance to project applicants who request it.

Given the district's limited capacity or lack of expertise or specific limited timeline, consultant services were identified to provide technical assistance to project applicants, with activities ranging from assisting with project visioning, community engagement, preliminary project design, site assessments, mapping, real estate support, and grant application support.

Three service providers were selected pursuant to a request for proposals process to help satisfy this broad list of technical needs that will contribute to successful urban open space projects throughout Sonoma County.

**Discussion:**

The Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District (Ag + Open Space) offers a competitive Community Spaces Matching Grant Program, also known as Matching Grant Program (MGP or Program) for projects within or near the County's urban areas. The Program is borne out of Measure F and is described in paragraph 5 of the Expenditure Plan as follows:

*"5. Other open space projects include but are not limited to, urban open space and recreation projects*

*within and near incorporated cities and other urbanized areas of Sonoma County. Funds for these projects shall be available to cities, the County and other entities through a matching grant program, with preference given to acquisition and development of projects that link communities. Examples of these projects include creek restoration and enhancement, such as along the Petaluma River, Santa Rosa Creek and Laguna de Santa Rosa, trails, athletic fields, and urban greenspace.”*

Since 1994, Ag + Open Space has accepted 69 projects into the MGP in each of the County’s nine incorporated Cities and numerous unincorporated areas, pledging over \$50 million to community-based organizations, Cities, County departments, and other public agencies. Generally located in areas lacking open space, MGP funding has enabled the development and implementation of innovative projects that reflect the needs of Sonoma County’s unique and diverse communities. To date, the Program has protected over 500 acres of urban open space and that amount of acreage will more than double when all active projects are complete. With funding from the Matching Grant Program, 28 new public parks have opened and over 400 acres of natural habitats including urban creeks, marshes and wetlands, and riparian habitats have been restored or enhanced.

As a condition of funding, Ag + Open Space achieves permanent protection of lands through a conservation easement. As the majority of MGP projects include a public recreation component, Ag + Open Space may also receive a recreation conservation covenant which enables and permanently protects public recreational uses.

Ag + Open Space staff coordinates the Program with support from an MGP Staff Subcommittee and a Subcommittee comprised of representatives from the Ag + Open Space Advisory Committee and Fiscal Oversight Commission. The Subcommittees assist in evaluating applications and recommending projects for funding, as well as in the review and revision of Program administration and materials, forwarding any recommended changes to the full advisory bodies and Ag + Open Space Board of Directors (Board). For each funding cycle, the full Advisory Committee and the Fiscal Oversight Commission make recommendations for Program funding to be considered by the Board. The Board provides final approval for which projects are accepted into the Program, along with associated funding amounts and program revisions.

In October 2023, the Board directed staff to update the program guidelines and associated materials to increase equity, accessibility, and transparency. In March 2024, the Board approved the updated program guidelines and administration. To help address equity, staff recommended offering technical assistance to applicants who request it.

While Ag + Open Space staff are able to provide applicants with general support throughout the application process, many of the needs of applicants go beyond internal skills and capacity and require a robust and diverse set of skills and experience. Given the wide range of technical assistance services that applicants may request - project visioning, community engagement, preliminary project design, site assessments, mapping, real estate support, and grant application support - and the highly technical skills needed to provide these types of assistance, the most efficient use of taxpayer dollars is to enter into as-needed contracts with specialized outside resources that can provide these services to applicants. This approach will also allow staff to focus on program administration and to remain objective throughout the application process.

Ag + Open Space proposes three as-needed service agreements (on file with the Clerk of the Board) for a total amount not to exceed \$110,000 with:

1. An agreement with Carlile Macy, in an amount not-to-exceed \$50,000, to provide project

visioning/conceptualization, community engagement, preliminary project design, project site assessment, mapping/cartography, and zoning/permitting support.

2. An agreement with Green Impact, in an amount not-to-exceed \$30,000, to provide project visioning/conceptualization, community engagement, and grant application support.
3. An agreement with Complete Grant Solutions, LLC, in an amount not-to-exceed \$30,000, to provide project visioning/conceptualization, community engagement, and grant application support.

These contracts for various services are described in Attachment 1 (List of Contractors and Awards). Each firm submitted a proposal that was selected based on its ability to fulfill District needs in up to nine technical tasks:

1. **Project visioning/conceptualization:** Assist applicants in developing a vision for an urban open space project within their community. This may include but is not limited to identifying potential properties/sites, brainstorming amenities and/or improvements, and long term uses.
2. **Community engagement:** Assist applicants in community engagement activities that may include but are not limited to community meetings, surveys, input sessions, visioning sessions, and/or other forms of marketing and outreach.
3. **Preliminary project design:** Assist applicants in creating conceptual designs, project mock-ups, and other visual representations of a proposed project.
4. **Project site assessment:** Conduct site assessments to evaluate potential project opportunities or impediments and other features present on the property that may impact the project.
5. **Mapping/cartography:** Provide needed mapping or cartography services and expertise.
6. **Zoning and/or permitting support:** Assist applicants in activities that may include but are not limited to researching site zoning and needed permitting, and assisting applicants through the permitting process.
7. **California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) support:** Assist applicants in understanding the CEQA process and the documentation that may be needed for CEQA . The contractor will not prepare or complete any CEQA related documents, but rather provide guidance to the applicant as they navigate the process.
8. **Real estate transaction support:** Assist applicants in understanding the real estate transaction process, which may include but are not limited to such activities as researching fee title information, obtaining an appraisal, researching financing options, due diligence, site inspections, etc. The contractor will not perform these services, but rather provide guidance to the applicant as they navigate this process.
9. **Grant application support:** Review and provide feedback to applicants in preparation of the application materials that may include but are not limited to application narrative, assembling required documents, etc.

### **Competitive Selection Process**

Ag + Open Space conducted a Request for Proposal (RFP) process to identify and screen qualified contractors for the work described above. The RFP was sent to 874 suppliers and 2,200 notifications were sent to subscribers of the County's RFP posting list. The RFP was also advertised on the Ag + Open Space website and the County Purchasing website. A total of five entities submitted proposals for this RFP. Using a set of selection criteria, the proposals were reviewed and scored, and the top ranked candidates capable of satisfying the services needed were selected. The firms selected submitted responsive proposals that clearly addressed the needs of Ag + Open Space and thoughtfully responded to the elements described in the RFP.

Once an applicant has requested technical assistance, staff will initiate a meeting with the consultant to describe the agency's needs under the As-Needed agreement.

Specific details of each work assignment will be determined during project initiation, including the specific project scope of work, schedule for completion of the project scope, cost estimate, and payment provisions. Staff will then prepare a Task Order (see sample in Attachment 2) to memorialize the agreement reached during project initiation or through the project cost estimate process. The Task Order must be signed by Ag + Open Space staff and the consultant prior to the onset of work. Ag + Open Space will not guarantee any minimum or maximum amount of work to be completed under the As-Needed agreements. One advantage of selecting multiple service providers is the ability to request cost estimates to a pre-approved group of consultants in order to keep approved task orders competitive across many markets.

**Strategic Plan:**

This item directly supports the County’s Five-year Strategic Plan and is aligned with the following pillar, goal, and objective.

**Pillar:** Racial Equity and Social Justice

**Goal:** Goal 3: Ensure racial equity throughout all County policy decisions and service delivery.

**Objective:** Objective 1: Align the Board of Supervisor’s strategic priorities, policy, and operational goals with funding and resources.

**Racial Equity:**

**Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?**

No

**Prior Board Actions:**

March 5, 2024: District Board of Directors approved an update of the Matching Grant Program Guidelines.

October 24, 2023: District Board of Directors provided feedback and gave direction to staff to update the Matching Grant Program Guidelines.

November 12, 2019: District Board of Directors approved an update of the Matching Grant Program Guidelines.

December 6, 2011: Board Action #31 the District Board of Directors approved an update of the Matching Grant Program Guidelines.

August 11, 2009: Resolution 09-0739 the District Board of Directors approved an update of the Matching Grant Program Guidelines.

February 6, 2007: Resolution 07-0110, the District Board of Directors approved an update of the Matching Grant Program.

**FISCAL SUMMARY**

<b>Expenditures</b>	<b>FY23-24 Adopted</b>	<b>FY24-25 Projected</b>	<b>FY25-26 Projected</b>
Budgeted Expenses	\$40,000	\$35,000	\$35,000
Additional Appropriation Requested			
<b>Total Expenditures</b>			
<b>Funding Sources</b>			

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General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other	\$40,000	\$35,000	\$35,000
Use of Fund Balance			
General Fund Contingencies			
<b>Total Sources</b>	\$40,000	\$35,000	\$35,000

**Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:**

This amount is appropriated in the FY 2023-2024 budget and will be incorporated in the projected year's budgets. Funding for these contracts will come from Measure F sales tax revenue, approved by voters in 2006.

**Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):**

N/A

**Attachments:**

1. List of Consultants and Award
2. Professional Service Agreement with Carlile Macy, Inc.
3. Professional Service Agreement with Complete Grant Solutions, LLC
4. Professional Service Agreement with Green Impact

**Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:**

N/A