



Legislation Text

File #: 2020-0219, **Version:** 1

To: Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space Board of Directors
Department or Agency Name(s): Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District
Staff Name and Phone Number: Lauren Alpert, 565-7345
Vote Requirement: Majority
Supervisory District(s): Countywide

Title:

Public Outings & Youth Education Program

Recommended Action:

Authorize the General Manager of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District to execute five service agreements for public outings and youth education programs totaling \$1,380,959, effective from April 7, 2020 and ending June 30, 2023, as follows:

- A) An agreement with the Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation in the amount of \$162,466;
- B) An agreement with LandPaths in the amount of \$438,568;
- C) An agreement with the Sonoma Ecology Center in the amount of \$227,452;
- D) An agreement with the Sonoma Land Trust in the amount of \$162,466;
- E) And an agreement with the Sonoma Resource Conservation District in the amount of \$389,918.

Executive Summary:

The Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District has contracted with nonprofits and other service providers for outings and education programming for over a decade. This work directly supports the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District mission by offering hikes, field trips, workshops, and field based educational opportunities to the public on Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District-protected lands, particularly privately owned properties and fee lands that are otherwise not open to the public. These partnerships constitute the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District's Public Outings & Youth Education Program, Sonoma County's residents are able to engage with and benefit from the investments they make in land conservation. Currently, the program reaches 4,000 community members, adults and youth each year.

On December 23, 2019, the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District issued a Request For Proposals for public outings and youth education programs covering the next three years, with an understanding this investment will be continuously evaluated to determine whether this programming should continue after 2023. Given the specialized nature of this program and the geographically diverse protected lands on which this program provides access, the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District requires the assistance of experts in the field of public outings and youth education. Five service providers were selected pursuant to the above-described request for proposals process to support the

Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District's community relations efforts.

Discussion:

The Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District (Ag + Open Space) is committed to educating the community about the nature and impact of their investment in land conservation by providing geographically and thematically diverse outings and education programs through partnerships with local nonprofit organizations. Programs run in every supervisorial district, and with the addition of the Sonoma Land Trust we will be offering programs in the Baylands, which is an area of the county these programs have not historically visited. Approximately one-third of the public outings are led in Spanish or hosted by bilingual staff. Through these five partnerships, we plan to build upon this solid foundation to connect further with Sonoma County's communities.

Ag + Open Space's goals for the Public Outings & Youth Education programs are to: educate the community about the nature and impact of our work by providing geographically and thematically diverse outings and education programs, to provide access to lands not currently open to the public, to align messaging between Ag + Open Space and our partners, and to ensure a robust system for tracking data and impact.

Ag + Open Space proposes to enter into five service agreements (on file with the Clerk of the Board) for public outings & youth education services totaling \$1,380,959 effective for three years ending on June 20, 2023, as follows:

1. An agreement with the Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation in an amount of \$162,466;
2. An agreement with LandPaths in an amount of \$438,658;
3. An agreement with the Sonoma Ecology Center in an amount of \$227,452;
4. An agreement with the Sonoma Land Trust in an amount of \$162,466;
5. And an agreement with Sonoma Resource Conservation District in an amount of \$389,918.

Partners will receive payment for services on a monthly reimbursement basis, after work is completed. While public outings and youth education programs are suspended during the COVID-19-related shelter-in-place, partners are encouraged to utilize funds to plan programs, develop materials, and otherwise prepare to resume programming as soon as Health Orders allow. Up to 25% of the budget can be used for general program administration and planning, and Ag + Open Space will work with partners to define reasonable budgets for planning and communications related to programs on specific properties.

All five of the organizations have unique strengths:

- **LandPaths:** Specializes in culturally competent programming and diverse outreach and engagement, and their outings are geographically and thematically diverse.
- **Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation:** Focuses on an important natural resource, the Laguna de Santa Rosa, and has an excellent volunteer program that is utilized throughout their programs.

- **Sonoma Resource Conservation District:** Along with the Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District as a sub-contractor, the resource conservation districts (RCDs) are leaders in connecting communities with local agricultural heritage, the farming industry and career pathways within it, and food systems.
- **Sonoma Ecology Center:** Leads an impactful youth workforce development program, Enviroleaders, and much of their programming focuses on Sonoma Valley with culturally diverse and inclusive programs.
- **Sonoma Land Trust:** Will help us add new area of the County, the Baylands, to our outings and education offerings, and will be a strong partner in messaging about climate change.

Each organization was selected based on its ability to perform the combination of tasks (planning, field implementation, administration, and evaluation) required to achieve the program objectives described below:

- Increase public awareness of the Ag + Open Space mission and accomplishments, and increase community understanding of the positive impacts of land conservation.
- Encourage Sonoma County community members and visitors of all ages and cultural backgrounds to experience Ag + Open Space protected lands, to develop an appreciation for the conservation of working and natural lands, and to engage in the stewardship of protected land in their community.
- Demonstrate the multiple benefits of Sonoma County working lands and natural areas.
- Demonstrate the positive relationship between scenic open space, ecosystem resiliency, and community health.
- Provide resources and workshops that engage local farms and ranches in showcasing how land conservation and partnership with agriculture landowners protects Sonoma County's agricultural heritage and supports our local economy and environment.
- Connect students in grades K-12 to the working and natural lands of Sonoma County to explore the important relationship between healthy agricultural systems, a healthy environment, and healthy communities.
- Develop a strong sense of place by increasing youth awareness and appreciation for local agriculture, local farmers and food systems, and land conservation as a tool to permanently protect historic working farms and ranches.
- Provide an enjoyable, safe, and positive experience for youth to experience the beauty of our county's open space lands, and to appreciate the value and assist in the stewardship of protected lands in their community.
- To inspire the next generation of conservation leaders by promoting youth leadership in the local food and land conservation movements, and introducing career pathways in agriculture and conservation.
- To provide a series of educational opportunities that may include classroom visits, field trips, field research, scientific drawing, reflection activities to leave with teachers, etc.

Competitive Selection Process

Ag + Open Space conducted a Request for Proposal (RFP) process to identify and screen qualified contractors to provide two broad types of service, described above. The RFP was sent to approximately 668 organizations and advertised on the Ag + Open Space website and the County Purchasing website. A total of 5 organizations submitted proposals in response to this RFP. Using objective selection criteria, an evaluation committee comprised of internal and external staff independently reviewed all of the proposals, scored each according to the pre-established criteria, requested further information as needed, and selected the candidates most capable of providing the identified services. The five contractors identified above submitted responsive proposals that clearly addressed the needs of the Ag + Open Space and thoughtfully responded to the elements described in the RFP.

Beyond assessing the responsiveness and merit of all proposals received, review of proposals also prioritized cost/benefit (i.e. the costs per outing/field trip/event), along with partners' abilities to provide accessible programs that are engaging and well-aligned with state educational standards and the best available science.

Local Preference, Local Experience

All of the selected firms have locations in Sonoma County, and have significant experience working in the Sonoma County community.

Prior Board Actions:

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY 19-20 Adopted	FY20-21 Projected	FY21-22 Projected	FY 22-23 Projected
Budgeted Expenses	\$105,959	\$425,000	\$425,000	\$425,000
Additional Appropriation Requested				
Total Expenditures	\$105,959	\$425,000	\$425,000	\$425,000
Funding Sources				
General Fund/WA GF				
State/Federal				
Fees/Other	\$105,959	\$425,000	\$425,000	\$425,000
Use of Fund Balance				
Contingencies				
Total Sources	\$105,959	\$425,000	\$425,000	\$425,000

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

This amount is appropriated in the FY19-20 budget, and will be incorporated in the projected years' budgets.

These contracts include pro-rated funds for April-June of 2020 to ensure continuity of service (current contracts expired March 31, 2020) for the Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation, LandPaths, Sonoma Ecology Center, and Sonoma Resource Conservation District, and to provide funding for the development of a new partnership with the Sonoma Land Trust.

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

Attachments:

Related Items “On File” with the Clerk of the Board:

1. Agreement with Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation
2. Agreement with LandPaths
3. Agreement with Sonoma Ecology Center
4. Agreement with the Sonoma Land Trust
5. Agreement with the Sonoma Resource Conservation District